



**2020 Hampton Street · Room 3063A  
Columbia, SC 29204  
(803) 576-2083**

**Minutes  
June 20, 2022  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room**

**Attendance**

<b>Commissioner</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Present</b>
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	Yes
Wayman Stover	3	Yes
Glenice Pearson	4	Yes
Kip Dillihay	5	Yes
John Grego	6	Yes
Robert Squirewell	7	Yes
Deborah DePaoli	8	Yes
Khali Gallman	9	Yes
Darrell Jackson Jr.	10	No
Gail Rodriguez	11	No

<b>Staff &amp; Visitors</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Gretchen Barron	County Council
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Aric Jensen	County Administration
Robin Waites	Historic Columbia

**Call to Order**

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:33 pm. Members, staff, and guests met in-person or by telephone.

**Approval of Agenda**

- ⇒ **Weber moved to approve the agenda which was seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Approval of Minutes**

- ⇒ **Weber moved to approve the minutes of the May meeting which was seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Historic Columbia – presentation**

- In response to the Historic Committee's request for information about the process for purchasing historic properties by the County, Epps reached out to Robin Waites, the Executive Director of Historic Columbia. The complexity of the details led the Conservation Commission to invite Robin Waites to provide a history, and answer questions, about the City of Columbia and

Richland County's collaborative approach to historic preservation and how Richland County became owners of historic properties without purchasing them.

- In 1964, the South Carolina legislature created a special purpose district called the Richland County Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC), which was designed to encourage the City of Columbia and Richland County to work together and as a way to accept public monies in matters of historical preservation. Weber asked if the RCHPC only applied to Richland County. Waites responded the RCHPC was specific to properties in Richland County, because private citizens raised funds for and were able to acquire federal funds to purchase the Robert Mills House and Gardens. In order to receive the federal funds, the Richland County Legislative Delegation proposed the creation of a special purpose district before the General Assembly.
- Collectively through the RCHPC, the City of Columbia and Richland County would gain managerial responsibilities over the Woodrow Wilson Family Home, the Hampton-Preston Mansions and Gardens, the Mann-Simons site, and the Robert Mills Home and Gardens.
- In 1994, the RCPHC decided to dissolve itself and reached an agreement, stating Historic Columbia would serve as the site manager and Richland County would provide the funds to facilitate the site management, liability insurance, and capital improvements
- Jensen asked why it was decided to give the county ownership of sites within the incorporated boundaries of the City. Waites responded the RCPHC was established to encourage partnership between the City of Columbia and Richland County and all of the properties were within Richland County. Waites continued, saying a lawsuit would be filed by the former members of the RCPHC against RCPHC alleging the self-dissolution was not legal. The South Carolina Supreme Court determined a special purpose district could only be dissolved by the state legislature, and would go through that process in 2006. The following year, deeds were transferred to the City of Columbia and Richland County in cooperative agreements
- Pearson mentioned she wants Richland County to acquire local sites significant to African-American and civil rights history, namely the Benjamin Mack house and Randolph Cemetery, and asked Waites to describe the process of acquisition. Waites responded the acquisition is not as complicated as the logistics of operating the site. Further, Waites explained the Historic Columbia acts as a fiscal agent for several sites, but does not provide any support beyond financial. Weber asked how Historic Columbia is funded, and Waites responded they receive 25% of their funds from the city, 25% of their funds from the county, and the remaining 50% is raised from other sources.
- Epps asked Waites to make a recommendation about the Benjamin Mack house and similar ones. Waites responded we need an organization to manage what we ultimately want the site to be. We could establish partnerships with non-profits or internally conduct the work. Weber asked if Historic Columbia would be interested in assisting. Waites acknowledged it depends what kind of resources are available. With sites that are further away, a different staffing system is needed compared to their properties within walking distances of each other. If the resources exist, Historic Columbia has the infrastructure to market, rehabilitate, and raise money for a site.

- Stover asked what budget challenges Historic Columbia has. Waites replied there are staffing challenges to manage the properties and to keep the buildings in good condition. Epps added the Conservation Commission is set up by County ordinance to accept public or private grant or property donations.

## **Report of the Chair**

- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan** – Grego noted we held a work session a few weeks ago and had attendance from County Council and Conservation Commission members. Councilmembers asked sharp questions and were generally supportive. We are waiting for the next Development & Services Committee (D&S) meeting. We hope there is a motion to forward a plan to council for approval by the D&S, which would be the next step.
- ⇒ **Land Development Code Report from Community Planning and Development -- Richland County Zoning Map:** Jensen explained Richland County did a public media campaign to remind people about the Land Development Code, which was being rewritten in the first place to create better communities in Richland County through a public planning process. Jensen added the Planning Commission plans to meet July 11<sup>th</sup> to decide which two zoning classifications RU (rural district) will become: RT (rural transition) or AG (agriculture).

Jensen suggested, most likely, AG will be zoned commercial agriculture activity which are big operations over 35 acres. Smaller parcels will be zoned RT. Grego mentioned there was some tension that could be alleviated by more flexible permitting, particularly for those who felt they did more than recreational farming. Jenson responded, saying the Planning Commission is working through it and citizens' concerns vary depending on the area of Richland County.

Grego expressed the map looked good in general, but he was more concerned with the amendments to the code. The first amendments would not allow multifamily housing in some residential zoning districts and there was pressure to keep the housing single family. He stated this was inconsistent with density-based zoning. DePaoli agreed and suggested this contributed to urban sprawl, pushing children far away from healthcare, school, and grocery stores.

Grego agreed he would continue the drafting of a letter to the Planning Commission about these topics and he would send it to the Conservation Commission before the next meeting. Jensen clarified and mentioned in order to determine the zoning classification, the Assessor's database provides a certain tax status. To be classified as AG, it must be a contiguous agricultural area of at least 35 acres.

- **Pinewood Lake Park** – Grego stated there were no updates to report.
- **New Commissioners – Khali Gallman (Councilmember Mackey) and Kip Dillihay (Councilmember Terracio):**
  - Gallman stated she is from Columbia, and relocated back to the area after living in Raleigh for several years. She has a background in marketing and public relations, and worked in the past for the Columbia Mayor's office. She now works as a real estate agent

- for Coldwell Banker in the midtown office. She is excited to participate in the preservation of history.
- Dillihay stated he is from Columbia and has a background in biology, chemistry, and went to law school in Charleston. Once back in South Carolina, he worked in economic development for the state in Sumter and Lee Counties and is now a real estate agent for the Coldwell Banker in the midtown office. Dillihay stated our resources are there for us to take care of and we have an obligation to do that for our next generation.

### Treasurer's Report

- **FY22 General Budget Status** – Squirewell reported there were no notable changes in the budget, and asked if funds remaining for Pinewood Lake Park and Mill Creek would be rolled over. Epps explained remaining funds do not roll over and they are returned to Richland County's general fund. Epps added Finance is still working on the coding error at the budget office, where salaries were not being taken from the proper codes. Once these salaries are taken from the correct codes, this will significantly reduce the remaining funds in the Pinewood Lake Park and Mill Creek budgets.

### Natural Resource Committee Report

- **Mitigation credits potential purchase** – Epps announced the credit sales were approved by County Council. Weber asked the amount of incoming funds. Epps responded there will be two separate amounts, \$30,000 and \$814,000, to come back into the Penny Program. Weber added only the smaller amount will be coming from Richland County. The larger amount is from projects near I-26 and US-21, which Calhoun and Orangeburg Counties purchased from Richland County.
- **Lake Elizabeth donation acceptance** – Weber stated there were no updates to report.
- **Columbia Rowing Club ---** Epps updated that new contract is still being reviewed by Legal.
- **Land purchase grant** – Epps stated he applied for a highly competitive grant through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, but the Conservation Commission did not receive the grant.

### Historic Committee Report

- **Historic Tourism Marketing Plan-Request for Proposals – update:** Pearson reminded the Conservation Commission the International African-American Museum in Charleston will bring many tourists to the area, but she noted the history did not end at that site where a majority of enslaved people were first brought from West Africa. To bring people further inland, Pearson proposed the idea of showcasing a variety of black experiences with the historic sites we already have in the Midlands region. A Request for Proposals was issued and a vendor was selected. We wanted professionals who would help us envision and draw people to Richland County.

Epps acknowledged the vendor selected was Historic Columbia and the contract is now in procurement for approval, but we have to be mindful of the budget within our operating window. Pearson asked what the next steps would be, and Epps responded he planned to meet with

Historic Columbia and prepare a timeline to present to the Conservation Commission. Pearson responded she wanted to meet with Historic Columbia before the presentation. Epps reminded we had to be heedful of requests outside of the contract's scope of services because of the budget. Pearson voiced Historic Columbia needed input from the African-American community to make sure the historic aspects are developed and this community has a head start to capitalize on the opportunity. Squirewell agreed. Epps agreed he would look into a meeting between Pearson, Squirewell, and Historic Columbia, while being mindful of the budget. Stover suggested, once complete, we should have a news conference to inform the public of the partnership.

- ⇒ **Weber moved to extend the meeting by 15 minutes which was seconded by Squirewell. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **Conservation Program Analyst's Report**

- **FY2021-2022 RCCC Grants** – McKenzie reported grant payment request forms flooded in by the deadline on June 15<sup>th</sup>. We are still working on the paperwork and some need a few corrections. We only have one applicant that did not get their information to us by the deadline. We do not foresee any major problems or communication issues. This should be wrapped up, and it has to be, by the end of the month. Pearson asked when the new process begins for grants. McKenzie explained once he notifies the recipients of their awards, there will be a meeting for the recipients.
  - **Fabel Conservation Easement – action item:** McKenzie reminded the Conservation Commission of the early discussions concerning a conservation easement associated with Fabel Farms from 2018. With preliminary steps already taken, we need approval to move forward.
- ⇒ **The Natural Resources Committee moved to continue its negotiations concerning the Fabel conservation easement which was seconded by Weber. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **Conservation Manager's Report**

- **Staff vacancies** – Epps stated Mary Hannah Lindsay was hired as the Administrative Assistant, who has experience working for the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District. Her first day was today. Epps reminded we are working on setting interviews for the Land Program Planner position, but are not receiving many applications. For the second Administrative Assistant position, we are working with administration to confirm funding is aligned.
- **Budget timeline** – Epps reported the FY22-23 budget was approved after County Council had the third reading on June 7, 2022 and approved it.
- **Mill Creek Bridge design** – Epps explained, since March, the prices of concrete have increased by 50%. An engineer Epps consulted suggested a delay to wait for concrete prices to fall. Epps also stated we are still waiting on a “no-permit-required” letter for the Army Corps of Engineers. Weber confirms we are proceeding, but are waiting to submit a bid. Weber also suggested we consult with Rodriguez; whose specialty is bridge safety as a structural engineer.

⇒ At 5:11pm, Weber moved to adjourn the meeting which was second by Squirewell. Motion passed unanimously.