



2020 Hampton Street • Room 3063A
 P.O. Box 192 • Columbia, SC 29202
 (803) 576-2080

Minutes
February 28, 2022

Attendance

Commissioner	District	Present
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	Yes
Wayman Stover	3	Yes
Glenice Pearson	4	Yes
Vacant	5	--
John Grego	6	Yes
Robert Squirewell	7	No
Deborah DePaoli	8	Yes
Vacant	9	--
Darrell Jackson Jr.	10	Yes
Gail Rodriguez	11	Yes

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Walker McDonald	Conservation Division
Ben Jones	GIS
Aric Jensen	County Administration
Patrick Wright	County Attorney

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:30 pm. All members, staff, and guests participated by Zoom video conference.

Approval of Agenda

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

Report from Community Planning & Development

Jensen reported the Lower Richland Tourism Plan Drop-In went well and a few Councilmembers attended. Jensen explained his recommended process for adopting the LRTP as a land-use document. It will be presented in its entirety, with no changes, as a document that was approved by the Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC). The Council would then adopt it as a land-use plan, as an appendix to the Comprehensive Land-Use Plan, or they could take key parts out of it and put them into the plan. Weber asked if the RCCC needed to take further steps. Jensen stated there were no steps for RCCC. Epps stated he will follow up on status. Jensen reported there were discussions about Mitigation Bank credits to be sure there were enough for Economic Development plans, penny projects and RCCC projects.

Approval of Minutes

⇒ **Pearson moved to approve the amended minutes of the December 20, 2021 meeting and was seconded by Weber. Motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **Wayman Stover new Commissioner (District 3) Introduction:** Grego introduced Mr. Stover who gave his background. Grego stated we should recognize Sam Holland's service soon.
- **Introduction of new RCCC liaison, Councilmember Gretchen Barron:** Grego welcomed and introduced the Councilmember. Barron stressed the importance of communication between the RCCC and County Council before having to log-off.
- **Introduction of County Attorney, Patrick Wright:** Grego welcomed and introduced Mr. Wright. Wright quickly introduced himself before having to log-off.
- **Resuming meeting in-person – discussion/action item:** Grego stated in-person RCCC meetings could resume next month if restrictions eased, as expected.

⇒ **Pearson moved to have the option for in-person meetings in the future and was seconded by McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.**

- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan Drop-In Update:** Grego stated there was decent attendance and productive discussions but hoped to see a few more Councilmembers there. The goals of the Drop-In were met, for the most part. Pearson was pleased with the turnout and the number of Lower Richland residents present.
- **Annual Plan for County Council:** Grego stated the presentation should be on March 15.
- **Commissioner Advocacy Plan:** Grego reminded there was a template that could be used to inform Councilmembers about the Annual Plan presentation, impressions of the LRTP Drop-In, or other RCCC activities and goals.

Treasurer's Report

- **Budget:** Epps reported there are no notable changes and we are on track with the budget. We are nearing the end of the Mill Creek bridge design stage. We are preparing to pay out around \$200,000 and the total design cost was \$250,000. It was clarified that this was design only and the bridge itself was separate. Epps explained due to a coding error at the budget office, salaries were not being properly recorded out of the budget. It is being corrected. Epps was told by budget office what we don't spend out of the general fund transfer-in of \$143,988 goes back to the fund, not the RCCC fund balance.

Conservation Committee Report:

- **RCCC Community Conservation Grants – presentation:** Weber reported the committee had 8 grant applicants and all were awarded some money for a recommended total of \$72,208.
- **Cabin Branch purchase –** Epps stated this is proceeding. It was approved for us to begin negotiations by Council and a closing attorney has been engaged. Grego asked about questions from Council about

purchases and Epps explained, while there were new rules we were unaware of, we have been proceeding correctly.

- **Mitigation credits potential purchase** – Epps stated we are working to figure out future mitigation needs to reshape our strategy.
- **Lake Elizabeth donation acceptance** – Epps reported he has initiated discussions and they are in the process of answering our questions.
- **Columbia Rowing Club agreement** – Epps updated the agreement is still being reviewed by Legal.

Historic Committee Report

- **RCCC Historic Preservation Grants – presentation:** Pearson thanked the committee for their preparation and appreciated the efficiency of the session. We received 10 applications and awarded 9 of them. The recommended total was \$177,792.
- **Heritage Tourism Marketing - Request for Proposal:** Epps reported after being told by Finance we no longer had H-Tax money, they came back to us and told us we do. After figuring out the coding to apply to this RFP, we hope to have this to Procurement by this week.
- **Historic Tourism Marketing project – update:** Pearson stated she will be reserving comments until some related meetings have occurred.

RCCC Grant Approval - action item

- ⇒ **Weber moved to approve the RCCC FY22-23 Grants package and pass it on to Council and was seconded by McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.**

Conservation Manager’s Report

- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan - Capital Improvement Project 10-year budget – action item:** Epps stated he has been submitting this document to Administration for 2-3 years and they suggested getting RCCC approval in case Council asked if it had been approved by RCCC. It is an incremental plan that asks for \$20M over the next 10 years. Pearson suggested a statement be added indicating the costs are estimates based on current pricing and actual costs will differ. Epps explained the LRTP is more of a 20-30-year plan but Administration wanted a 10-year document. We will find funding for each project as we go and will ask for Council approval as needed.
- ⇒ **McSwain moved to approve the Capital Improvement Project 10-year budget and was seconded by Weber. Motion passed unanimously.**
- **Basic Roles and Responsibilities – request for Commissioner action:** Epps stated the annual document can be signed and returned by email, mail or drop-off.
- **Property Management:** McDonald displayed maps of Mill Creek food plots and roadsides that have been mowed. Grego asked if the food plots are being actively managed and McDonald answered they are just being bush-hogged. McDonald showed photos of a bird box project at Pinewood Lake Park with

the SC Wildlife Federation. Epps added we are promoting these types of projects publicly and sharing with Council.

- **FY21-22 RCCC Grants – update:** Epps reported two grantees have already finished their projects and have been paid out. The Ensor-Keenan House has been visited and looks great. Camp Discovery has completed their project. The SC Wildlife Federation project has submitted some invoices.
- **Tree Canopy Study – update:** Epps stated the study was conducted with a grant where a group came in and worked with Richland County GIS staff Ben Jones in the Hollinshead Creek Watershed so we now have the ability to conduct on our own study. It takes existing GIS information and indicates the best places to plant trees for water quality. Weber asked about the feasibility of doing this study countywide. Jones stated it would be very difficult but he had learned how, and had completed a countywide canopy layer that indicates trees and their heights. Grego asked about focusing on the 5 identified priority watersheds and Jones stated it would still be a lot of work and staff time is not available. Existing data could be used as a 2019 baseline. Weber asked if an intern could be useful and requested another meeting to focus on the subject.
- **Walker McDonald – Peace Corps Zambia:** McDonald announced he will be leaving the Conservation Land Planner position to take an assignment with the Peace Corps in Zambia.

New Business

- Weber stated there is a bill in the SC House (H3120) that would offer a tax credit to landowners who allow public-use trails on their property. It could have an impact on the way we do things in the future when working with landowners.
- ⇒ **At 5:02 pm, McSwain moved to adjourn the meeting which is seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
John McKenzie