



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

Minutes
May 16, 2022
4th Floor Conference Room

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
Khali Gallman	9	No
Darrell Jackson Jr.	10	No
Gail Rodriguez	11	No

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Aric Jensen	County Administration
Brian Crooks	Planning Department
Geo Price	Planning Department

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:35 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 April meeting which was seconded by McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **LRTP** – Grego stated the LRTP Work Session with County Council will be on May 26th. We had a meeting last week to discuss it and plan to use the PowerPoint from the first presentation and the drop-in. We will use the posters on display and we will add maps to the slides. At Aric’s suggestion, we will provide a 5-year plan spreadsheet with current and potential projects and spending. Pearson asked about being able to watch the session and being able to attend in person. Both methods were confirmed. Grego stated the speaker will be featured but not the slides for those watching online. Grego stated the presentation will be 15-20 minutes long.

- **Proposed Lower Richland Drop Center, Solid Waste** - Grego reported the possibility of a Lower Richland solid waste drop center being suggested on the County-owned land next to the Magistrate's office. DePaoli asked about the items it will accept. Grego stated other centers were very busy and it was for bulky items to discourage illegal dumping. Epps stated it would likely go on an upland area in that location, if approved. Weber stated we needed to be proactive and be prepared to make a recommendation when the time comes. Grego and Weber stated when done well, these centers can be clean and provide a place to dispose of things like paint. McSwain asked if the center was manned and if it was fenced in and it was confirmed by Grego. Epps has called Eric Johnson at Solid Waste to learn more but has not heard back. Weber stated we will be working through more things like this in the future, Epps stated when we don't put easements on these properties, for future mitigation opportunities, that is the downside.
- **Bates Old River** – Grego stated it may tie into the Columbia Rowing Club's plans to apply for Water Recreation Resource funds to build a new dock and in order to do that, it would have to be accessible by the public, which they are ok with. The County has been reluctant to accept maintenance responsibility for the landing but it may be forced on them for the CRC site. Weber asked if there was an organization that has responsibility now for the proposed Bates Old River landing. Grego answered groups like Friends of Congaree, Congaree National Park and Congaree Riverkeeper are trying to get this done.
- **New Commissioner, Khali Gallman** – Grego reported on Gallman accepting the appointment from Councilmember Mackey in District 9 but not being able to attend this meeting due to prior commitments. Her background in marketing will be helpful.
- **Gills and Crane Creek Greenways** – Grego stated there was a request for a Crane Creek Greenway walkway under a Norfolk Southern Railway bridge which was rejected by the Railway. There was a follow-up meeting that didn't help so they are exploring alternatives. Gills Creek Greenway showed a layout to match available funding and the path includes an existing right-of-way owned by SC Dept. of Transportation (DOT). DOT wants to hold on to it in case of future development. Crooks stated we are still working on that design plan and will submit a recommendation in the next few weeks. Because of three property owners on Timberlane, it can't be closed and is why the trail is shown adjacent to Timberline rather than on Timberline itself.

Report from Community Planning & Development

- **Richland County Zoning Map** - Jensen reported we are going back to square one on mapping process after talking with the public. They are using some 2017 documentation from Clarion to create a presentation for Wednesday's Planning Commission meeting. Hopefully they will adopt a proposed schedule: two meetings a month, a special call and a work session. McSwain asked what people should be doing that don't agree with the new designations. Jensen answered they should be patient as the process has started over with a clean slate. We are working with a communications firm for an outreach and notifications strategy.
- **Budget** – Grego asked about a reduced salary line in the budget for the Commission. Jensen explained the County is trying to give a 4% cost-of-living increase to employees, getting some staff up to a livable wage, putting a percentage of the funds into a pool for use in case of need, and they are cleaning up the usual unused funds in salary budgets to re-allocate for the increases. These funds will still be available and nor positions are being taken away.

Treasurer's Report

- **Budget** - Epps stated the only change since the last meeting was the \$306,385 from the Acquisition Fund for the Cabin Branch property purchase. Grego asked if we were close to getting a report for the Mill Creek bridge design and Epps answered we are waiting for a "no permit required" letter from the

Corps. Grego stated it would be good to have a presentation on the design that hopefully Rodriguez could attend to bring her knowledge. It was decided to keep this under the Conservation Manager's Report instead of NR Committee. Epps shared details of a recent phone call with Booker Alston, whose grandfather worked at Mill Creek in the 1940s-1960s and grew up fishing and using the property with family there. Epps is going to take Mr. Alston to Mill Creek for a visit. DePaoli reminded us, after a conversation with a young African-American boy about his enthusiasm for fishing, it is our goal to create these opportunities. Epps stated Finance is still working on the coding error at the budget office, where salaries were not being taken from the proper codes.

Natural Resources Committee Report

- **Mitigation credits potential purchase** – Epps reported on recent approved sales for York County for about \$40,000 in credits. From that, the County gets about \$30,000. We also have two pending DOT projects that will bring in over \$800,000. We are getting a lot of out-of-service area sales because they don't have local mitigation opportunities. McSwain stated it is important to have this information in our minutes and Weber replied he will be putting together a good accounting of that information soon. Epps explained, because the Penny paid for the property, all of the money collected goes back to the Penny. Because this is a Public-Private Partnership, some goes to our partners who helped us set up the bank.
- **Lake Elizabeth donation acceptance** – Epps updated we are waiting for answers to recently asked question for clarification. Grego stated we are asking tough questions to understand the County's liability if we accepted.
- **Columbia Rowing Club agreement** – Epps reported we received a new proposed agreement. They are thinking of changing their proposal so they can go after SC DNR funds for the purpose of a new dock.

Historic Committee Report

- **Heritage Tourism Marketing - Request for Proposal:** Pearson stated she has had a conversation with Councilmember Livingston about historic African-American site purchases by the County. Pearson reported we received two submitted proposals and will evaluate those before May 20, 2022.
- **Self-assessment request** - Pearson stated she has a better understanding of the history of the grants program and the frequency of repeat funding of historic sites struggling to maintain or exist. Randolph Cemetery and the Benjamin Mack Home are sites she has discussed with the Historic Committee and Livingston.

Conservation Program Coordinator's Report

- **RCCC Grants** – McKenzie reported everything was on schedule for the FY21-22 grants and there is a new completed project at Harbison State Forest where they have reconstructed four failing bridges on the trail system with the help of Eagle Scouts.
- **Fabel Conservation Easement** – McKenzie reported the potential for an easement of approximately 103 acres within a priority watershed in the upper Richland County. This property has a small but pretty shoreline on Little Cedar Creek. Fabel wants to place the easement on all of the property but has been encouraged by staff to set aside some of the land around his home for any future plans or changes. Fabel is not looking for any payment but also doesn't want to pay any of the related expenses of creating the easement. It was noted this has been under consideration for about 4 years and we need to get it to the Natural Resources Committee soon to keep the ball rolling.
- Pearson asked if there were any conservation programs under the RCCC directed at low-income communities of the county, especially young people. Epps stated the RCCC conservation grant

programming is directed at all communities and sometimes benefits low-income communities directly. The Richland Soil & Water Conservation District has environmental education programs aimed at all schools and children in the County. DePaoli stated SC DNR has stepped up its outreach programming for people of color and underserved communities. Epps added grants were awarded to programs to increase access for County children to outdoor education opportunities. McSwain stated grants to groups like Dutch Fork Elementary and Camp Discovery were for that very purpose. Pearson stated she wondered how we could provide more programming to communities, not schools because some of those schools are troublesome for the families in those communities.

Conservation Manager's Report

- **Staff vacancies** – Epps stated we are still working on setting up interviews for a new Land Program Planner and there are now more applicants. There have been interviews for the Administrative Assistant position and we are ready to hire with confirmation from Budget & Finance and Administration.
- **Budget timeline** – Epps stated we are past some of the steps on the timeline already but there will still be three readings and a public hearing.
- **Pinewood Lake Park (PLP)** – Jensen stated the big issue with PLP and the dam is the liability that will come with ownership of the dam. The County's insurance provider will not insure dams of any size. If the County were to take on that responsibility, it would have to self-insure. There is an ad-hoc committee for PLP and they gave staff directions to assess the issue. It is considered a high-hazard dam in South Carolina but there is very little downstream that would cause problems. Weber clarified the County owns the lake bed but not the dam. The owner of the dam wants to deed it to the County.

⇒ **At 5:03 pm, Weber moved to adjourn the meeting which is seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
John McKenzie