



2020 Hampton Street · Room 3063A
Columbia, SC 29204
(803) 576-2080
February 26, 2024
4th Floor Conference Room
January Meeting Minutes

Attendance

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

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Val Morris	Conservation Division
Jessica Thompson	Conservation Division
Chelsea Holliday	Conservation Division
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Aric Jensen	Assistant County Administrator
Michael Maloney	Director of Public Works

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:31 pm. Members, staff, and guests met in-person or by Zoom.

Staff Introductions Epps introduced the new staff members, Jessica Thompson, Sustainability Planner, and Chelsea Holliday, Administrative Assistant. Each commissioner introduced themselves and shared the district they represent.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

⇒ **Weber moved to approve January minutes which was seconded by Stover. Motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **DPW interest in utilizing land in Lower Richland for public service:** Michael Maloney, Director of Public Works, introduced potential County properties he's interested in developing to relocate the Richland County Recycling Center located in Eastover, SC. Maloney described some of the issues they were having at the Eastover site, such as restrictions on certain items they could accept, traffic congestion, and limitations on trailer sizes. When describing one particular site, Maloney said it would be a great location to be hidden from view, has fewer homes in the area, and they would add lanes to assist getting into the site safely. Jensen also provided input on the

site selection process. He mentioned they were considering locations near intersections, natural barriers such as railroad tracks or large ditches, power corridors, and the distance pedestrians would need to travel.

⇒ **Weber moved to have the DPW interest in utilizing land in Lower Richland item from Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) agenda to the Natural Resources Committee (NRC) agenda, which was seconded by Young. Motion passed unanimously.**

- **Congaree Biosphere Region (CBR) - update:** Grego reported about the 2024 Congaree Research Symposium and how Epps and Jensen were part of a guest speaking panel. Epps spoke about the Lower Richland Tourism Plan (LRTP) and Jensen spoke on gateway communities and planning. Before the symposium they met with Cliff McCreedy, Science and Stewardship Coordinator for National Park Service, who is a supporter of the LRTP and Gregory Sprouse, Director of Research, Planning, and Development with Central Midlands Council of Government. Much of their discussion centered around grant funding sources and planning.
- **Greenway Advisory Committee - update:** Grego reported, Rocky Branch Greenway planners met earlier this month and they are moving along with plans. Gills Creek Greenway planners planned with Midlands Technical College to share their parking lot as an access point. There was discussion about creating a pedestrian refuge island to make it safer to cross Devine Street at Crowson Road. He and Epps spoke with Councilman Weaver about a parcel of property he owns and he seems very receptive to the idea of a greenway running through his property.
- **Columbia Rowing Club (CRC) Operating Agreement:** Grego reported the agreement with CRC was approved by County Council. There are also preliminary discussions with Richland County Recreation Commission (RCRC) and other organizations regarding the provision of public fishing docks on the property.
- **March 19th Council Report – update:** Grego reported staff has prepared a slideshow of the Annual Plan, which he will present to County Council on March 19th, 2024.
- **Advocacy – update:** Weber and Gallman reported they spoke with Councilman Pugh.

Report from Community Planning & Development

- **Administration – update:** Jensen reported they're aiming to begin the contracting process for the Comprehensive Plan by July 1, 2024. He also mentioned this will be the first year where a sustainability and resilience component will be added to the plan.

Treasurer's Report

- **FY23–24 General Budget – update:** Epps reported \$700,000.00 was transferred from the Acquisition budget to the Construction budget for the Mill Creek Bridge Replacement.

Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) Report

- **HPC Grant Recommendations – presentation:** Grego gave a report on the FY24-25 HPC grant recommendations on behalf of the HPC.
- **Heritage Tourism Marketing Plan (HTMP) – update:** Epps reported the solicitation for the plan started today and the evaluators were chosen.
- **Historic Preservation Plan (HPP) – update:** Epps reported the HPP is in the procurement process.
- **Cemetery Protection Ordinance – update:** McKenzie reported he is preparing to submit an agenda briefing to be considered in an upcoming County Council committee meeting.

Natural Resources Committee (NRC) Report

- **NRC Grant Recommendations - presentation:** Weber gave a report on the FY24-25 NRC recommendations for his committee.
- **Forestry Stewardship Plan – update:** Epps reported this is still a work in progress.
- **Potential Property Purchase – update:** Epps reported this is still a work in progress.
- **Mill Creek Bridge – update:** Epps reported this will be presented to the Administration and Finance Committee (A&F) tomorrow night. If it’s approved, it will then move to County Council’s first meeting in March.
- **Bates Old River – update:** Weber reported this is still a work in progress.
- **Mitigation Bank Credits – update:** Epps reported the last credit sale approved by County Council was \$113,687.50.

FY24-25 RCCC Grant Recommendations – action:

⇒ **Weber moved to approved the RCCC grant recommendation for FY24-25, which was seconded by Young. Motion passed unanimously.**

Conservation Program Analyst’s Report

- **Fabel Easement – update:** McKenzie reported he is currently obtaining survey quotes for the procurement process.
- **Lake Elizabeth Conservation Easement – update:** McKenzie reported he is currently obtaining survey quotes for the procurement process. He is currently in the annual process of monitoring all 32 existing easements.

- **FY23-24 RCCC Grants – update:** McKenzie reported all of the grantees submitted their quarterly reports on time, and everyone is on track. He will be attending a requested meeting with the Cottontown Historic District regarding their grant, but he doesn't think it's anything major.
- **Events – update:** McKenzie reminded the commission the COACH Documentary will premiere this Saturday, March 2, 2024 at Trinity Baptist Church, 2521 Richland Street, Columbia, SC.

Conservation Manager's Report

- **Staff Vacancy – action item:** Epps reported he is still seeking to fill the position for the Land Program Planner.
- **FY24 - 25 update:** Epps reported he submitted the FY24-25 budget to Administration before the January 31 deadline. He explained the budget will go before Administration for any questions or corrections. If there aren't any, it will then move to County Council for three readings, including a public hearing, and finalization in June. Lastly, he stated the new grants approved by the Commission will also be included in the new budget.
- **New Business:** Epps presented a flyer and informed the group about a Community Planning Charrette. He thought this would be something they would want to look into because the Broad River property is in this planning area.
- **Public Input:** None reported
- **Adjournment:**

⇒ **At 5:00 pm, Young moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted, Val Morris