



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

**Minutes  
March 15, 2021**

**Attendance**

Commissioner	District	Present
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	Yes
Sam Holland	3	Yes
Glenice Pearson	4	Yes
Buddy Atkins	5	Yes
John Grego	6	Yes
Robert Squirewell	7	Yes
Carol Kososki	8	Yes
Vacant	9	--
Darrell Jackson, Jr.	10	Yes
Gail Rodriguez	11	Yes

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Brian Crooks	Planning Services Division
Meghan Sullivan	Planning Services Division
Tommy DeLage	Planning Services Division
Robin Carter	CP&D Business Administration
Annette House	CP&D Business Administration

**Call to Order**

John Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:33 pm. All members, staff, and guests participated by Zoom video conference due to the closure of County offices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

John noted that the Atlas Road project should have been included in the agenda under Report of the Chair. Also, Glenice Pearson added an item on planting a tree in the memory of Becky Bailey and Carol Kososki added an item to discuss the article that was in the Sunday paper under new business.

**Approval of Agenda**

⇒ **Charles moved to approve the amended agenda, which was seconded by Tim. The amended agenda Motion passed unanimously.**

## **Approval of Minutes**

- ⇒ **Tim moved to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Gail Rodriguez with Sweet Home Community changed to the Atlas Road Community. Motion passed unanimously to approve the amended minutes.**

## **Report of the Chair**

John stated Darrell Jackson, Jr. has been appointed to the District 10 seat by Rev. Cheryl English and we still need an appointment for the District 9 seat. Carol stated we also need an appointment for the District 8 seat and John stated he had made a call to Councilmember Overture Walker regarding a potential candidate. John asked a question in regards to a motion that was previously passed by Buddy Atkins “if Carol is on the Executive Committee can she be a part of the regular commission meeting?” Buddy responded yes, she is still appointed and has not been replaced. She is an officer and on the Commission. Buddy stated Carol is an ex-officio non-voting member of the Executive Committee and a voting member of the Commission.

John described Buddy’s recommendation to change the website to have short bios on each Commissioner and this idea was discussed.

John began discussing a date and defining topics for a Strategic Planning Retreat and also stated the Strategic Plan was distributed to Commissioners to show the existing goals.

John described the goals as:

- (1) To implement a conservative property and facility management program.
- (2) To promote the development and preservation of inclusive and accurate historical resources.
- (3) To communicate the mission and activities of RCCC.
- (4) To implement the Lower Richland tourism plan.
- (5) To strengthen the capacity of the RCCC to support long term viability and achievement of the mission.

John said in order to get ready to go through the strategic plan we would like to have the Executive Committee provide a review and update on what progress has been made on the existing plan. This could be shared as the first part of an updated strategic plan. We need to make refinements and keep in mind the lack of staff to complete the strategic plan goals.

Glenice stated she supports this decision.

Glenice stated an additional concern- the commission does not have an established connection for many or any of the low income neighborhoods that are part of Richland County. She would like to have a discussion around that during the strategic planning meetings.

Buddy stated he has an idea to try to potentially explore grant opportunities through the USDA for roadside stands, disadvantaged farmers in the Cabin Branch area and wants to discuss it during the strategic planning.

John will share his take on where we stand on some of these goals and strategies.

John described the Atlas Road Project and his communication with Councilmember English and that she has not heard anything directly although John stated a lot of people are talking about it. Councilmember English seemed to believe it is an old community, parents are passing away leaving the property to their children and the children tend not to want to hold on to it. John stated the community was divided by previous road projects and which may have been a greater contributing issue than the current proposal.

Darrell Jackson, Jr. stated he does not have any information on the Atlas Road project. The Atlas Road project was currently suspended for a little while and he does not know the progress on it. Darrell stated there are lots of projects going on including a 200 house Senior Housing project.

Carol expressed her constituents concern on the 3 live oak grand trees located at the intersection of Atlas Road & Shop Road.

Gail Rodriguez stated if the designs have been started, there is no way to save those trees.

Carol stated she was unsure how far the design has progressed and it was important to find out where they are in the design process.

Quinton stated the trees near the intersection of Atlas Road & Shop Road are very different from a design standpoint because moving the center line for an existing intersection a large distance will get you into a lot of constraints with the way the road intersections are required to interact with each other.

**Announcements** –Buddy announced for her 38 years of service Carol Kososki was awarded the Order of the Palmetto, which is the State’s highest civil honor awarded by the Governor of South Carolina.

### **Treasurer’s Report**

From the Conservation Division budget Quinton provided the following information:

- **Conservation (General Fund key)** - Quinton reported the Conservation budget was 42% spent, which is well below the amount of 67% where it would be normally at this time of year. He explained this is due to a vacant position. (Charlie retired in December 2020 and her salary/benefits were being paid from this budget). He explained this budget key includes 40% of the Administrative Assistant position, 50% of the Division Manager position and 100% of the Conservation Education Analyst position salaries and benefits.
- **Conservation Commission (Special Revenue Funds - .5 mil)** - Quinton reported Conservation Commission budget was 64% spent. He explained it is all Conservation Commission activities except for the grants. The largest categories are Professional Services and Acquisitions and we have not done any acquisition’s this year, and it looks like the Mill Creek bridge and road enhancements will be significantly more than he anticipated and will likely use up both of these amounts. Quinton explained budget transfers and amendments will

need to made and approved for this to occur. To answer a question from John Quinton stated 100% of Conservation Program Analyst, 50% of Division Manager, and 60% of the Administrative position salaries and benefits come out of this key.

- **Pinewood Lake Park (transfer from General Fund)** - Quinton reported the next budget keys are General Fund monies provided to manage the Pinewood Lake Park and Mill Creek, Cabin Branch properties. He reported zero taken out for salaries and benefits as the Land Program Planner position was not filled during this fiscal year and in this key we have only spent 21% of the total--well under the spending for this time of year.
- **Mill Creek & Cabin Branch Tract (transfer from General Fund)** - Quinton reported this key is 56% spent, largely because we purchased a tractor for approximately \$39,000 which is used to maintain the Mill Creek and Cabin Branch tracts. The salaries for both the Pinewood Lake Park and Mill Creek and Cabin Branch tract are divided 60% to 40% for these two areas. He explained the \$100,000 payment for the Upper Mill Creek tract is taken from the Fund Balance account although the interest is shown in line item 529702 Interest.
- **Conservation Commission LS (Special Revenue Fund - .5 mil)** – Quinton explained this has been budgeted at \$250,000 for many years and this year it is at \$276,824.31 because when COVID-19 hit last year several grantees requested rollover to FY21 as they were unable to complete their grants and we extended some \$26,000 of FY20 grants to FY21. This category is 24% spent and although this sounds low many of these grants are back ended with construction activities and they generally come in at the end. A lot of years we don't spend all the funds because the grantees do not submit receipts. When we don't spend these funds they go into our Fund Balance or reserve account to be spent at a later date by the Commission. These funds go to the reserve account automatically and we often hold these funds for later large projects such as the Lower Richland Tourism Plan which has cost estimates at over \$18 million.

### **Report of the Community Planning & Development Director**

Brian Crooks said a Public meeting for Timberlane property re-engagement was scheduled for Thursday March 3-18-2021 at 6:00 pm. The event notice is posted on the County main webpage under events; county will be talking about the survey and what the survey is all about.

In relation to the budget and staffing, John spoke about the article that was in The State newspaper in regards to the \$1.9 Trillion stimulus package. \$80.6 million would be available to Richland County to help with revenue lost due to COVID-19 and although late for the budget preparation we assume this will help in getting funds for re-hiring positions such as the Conservation Program Analyst, other vacant positions, and legal services.

Quinton read a response from Clayton via email regarding the budget:

As relayed in the previous RCCC meeting, Administration and Budget communicated to me that they were reviewing all original budget request submissions, including general fund and special revenue funds, for potential reductions and/or redirections. Specifically, a double-digit (14%) budget reduction was requested from CP&D Department's general fund budget request based on the fact that the County continues to rely on the County's reserves, roughly \$10 million, to balance the budget. I am meeting

with Administrator Brown this week to discuss CP&D budget requests and will provide a budget update either in writing prior to the next RCCC meeting or at the next meeting.

Buddy and Charles requested the email from Clayton to be sent to them.

Buddy responded according to the Association of Counties there will be two tranches of money from the recently passed stimulus package, half the money will be sent within 60 days of the bill passage and the other half will be sent before the end of the year.

Carol wanted to know how dependence on the \$10 million on General Reserve Funds applies to us especially in Conservation since our funding is largely from the Special Revenue Fund - .5 mil?

Charles stated that it does not apply to us and that it is confusing because we keep mixing up these funds.

### **Conservation Committee Report**

Brian Crooks provided an update on the Land Development Code status stating not too much has changed; they are trying to schedule one on one meetings with Councilmembers to finalize the remapping process, and hope to get this completed and out for public review in April 2021.

Tommy DeLage stated once the comments get back to county, staff will make sure to get us the final draft that's going forward to the Public and County Council for our review.

John asked about the opportunity for public input and Brian stated they were planning on having a couple of different things including meetings with specific stakeholders, Zoning road shows for the public at large, one on one call in meetings which might be more appropriate for mapping questions, as well as the normal required meetings for ordinance approval.

Buddy gave a brief overview of the 7 Community Conservation grant applications received which totaled \$67,356.11, as well as the Conservation Committee approval of \$58,356.11 for the FY22 Community Conservation Grant recommendations. He stated the Dutch Fork Elementary Academy request was not funded because they have exceeded the amount of times they can be funded consecutively. He described that some committee members wanted to provide specific information to Gills Creek Watershed Association because the approach needs work to include stormwater events.

### **Historic Committee Report**

Sam reported that 15 applications were received for a total of \$484,177.00 and the Historic Committee recommended funding \$191,643.89 which included 10 grants. He provided a brief explanation of the committee process for making these recommendations.

John made a motion to extend the meeting for 20 minutes –motion passed unanimously.

## **RCCC Grant Recommendations Approval**

⇒ **Charles made a motion to approve the committee grant recommendations and Tim seconded it.**

Buddy began moving to bifurcate the Gills Creek Watershed grant or make an amendment to the motion and much discussion ensued regarding this motion regarding if and how requirements could be made on applicants and how they could be enforced.

⇒ **Buddy moved to amend the motion to bifurcate the voting to separate out the Gills Creek Watershed Grant. This motion died for lack of a second.**

John added there was every reason to assume from past experience the Gills Creek Watershed Association would work with Buddy to include his recommendations made a motion to approve the committee grant recommendations and Tim seconded it.

The original motion passed with Buddy dissenting.

John and others stated the Commission's intentions to have all the grant recommendations submitted as one and not divided into Community Conservation and Historic Preservation Grants as has been done in the past.

## **Conservation Manager's Report**

Quinton stated Anne Marie Johnson has unfortunately decided she wants to move on and we have been in the process in the last several months trying to find a new person to coordinate activities and become the volunteer garden manager at the Pollinator Garden. He stated we have found someone who is very interested--Robert Reese. He has been working with us and Anne Marie has agreed to work with us and Robert to transition to the garden manager position along with doing the many chores attached to the garden.

Quinton is still working with the selected consultant for the Mill Creek bridge and road improvement project in an effort to get a price in place we can afford.

Quinton stated he is still working on the ethics presentation update, does not have it yet, and not sure if we can access this presentation.

John made mention of the Basic Roles and Responsibilities which is signed by Commissioners every year acknowledging we are required to attend meetings along with other guidelines.

## **New Business**

John advised everyone that some emails have been circulating with his and other people's names but not the correct email. Look very closely at the emails that you are receiving and make sure they are not spam.

**Public Input**

John stated there was an article in the Public Information Office news release about Richland County leading the charge to celebrate black women. Richland County has the most historical markers for African American women of any county in the nation. The article features 13 memorials honoring business people, civic leaders, activists and other historic figures.

John initiated a discussion regarding the planting of trees for fallen commissioners.

Motion to adjourn by Tim and seconded by Glenice. Motion passed unanimously.  
Meeting ended at 5:30pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Annette House.