



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

**Minutes  
 October 19, 2020**

**Attendance**

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

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Nancy Stone-Collum	Conservation Division
Charlie Fisher	Conservation Division

**Call to Order**

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

**Approval of Agenda**

Charles Weber requested Quinton provide an overview of the Conservation Coordinator Analysis’ job description. This addition will be added to the Report of the Chair after the vacancy letter to Mr. Brown. Charles made a motion to approve the amended agenda and was seconded by Sam Holland. Motion carried. Carol made a motion to move the Report of the Chair to follow Treasurer’s report. Charles made a motion to approve the twice amended agenda and was seconded by Gail Rodriguez. Motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes**

Charles made a motion to approve the minutes of September 21, 2020 and was seconded by Buddy Atkins. Motion carried.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Robert Squirewell reported expenses are on target for early in the fiscal year. Professional Services has \$98,680 encumbered as was discussed last month. Nancy pointed out the expense for the laptop for the Administrative Assistant is now reflected in the budget.

Clayton Voignier could not attend but submitted a report in his absence that will be discussed after the Report of the Chair.

### **Report of the Chair**

Carol said she wanted to review the letter (replacing Nancy's position) sent to Mr. Brown on October 12. The letter focused on the importance and need to refill the position posted as soon as possible. The normal process has been followed and the justification statement was submitted to Clayton Voignier. After receiving the request, Clayton had questions to which Quinton responded; additional questions were asked late today and Quinton's response will be submitted in the morning. Carol said she received a phone call from Mr. Brown inquiring about the normal hiring process. Carol explained the process was being followed through the normal chain of command. Mr. Brown said to proceed and he would send an email response. Mr. Brown's follow-up email the next day said to proceed with the normal process. However, on Thursday, October 15, Mr. Brown sent an additional email to clarify and listed five steps outlining the hiring process. Carol questioned what the criteria is to determine adequate justification. There are duties to be conducted and there is no staff to do the work. It looks like this process will not be resolved before Nancy leaves at the end of the month. Decisions need to be made about what work will be done and what will not get done due to inadequate staffing of the Commission. Carol is concerned about the status of the hiring process, about the date for posting the position, and the list of formal criteria for justification. Tim McSwain said management has not agreed to post the position yet so there is no posting date set. Probably another round of questions will be forthcoming and that Clayton should be provided another week before taking further action. A brief discussion ensued about the possibility of hiring a contractor in the interim. The time frame to advertise and hire a replacement will take till at least January or February. In January, five new Richland County Council members will take office. Contacts are being made with new Council members at this time. Quinton will email Nancy's job description to the Commission members.

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

CDBG-MIT Action Plan – HUD provided several comments on the Action Plan (AP) to which staff provided responses last week. Based on subsequent feedback from HUD, staff anticipates that HUD will approve the AP by October 30. HUD also provided comments on the Grant Compliance and Financial Certifications; Administration's responses will be provided to HUD this week. In addition, staff has secured technical assistance (TA) at no cost to the County through HUD's TA Contractor, Capital Access. Staff has set up break-out meetings with the contractor over the next couple of weeks to assist in program implementation design. The scope of work for their TA runs through June 2021. Carol said there have not been any Blue Ribbon Committee Meetings scheduled and that the CBDG action plan needs additional specificity.

Land Development Code Rewrite – Planning staff is currently in the process of presenting testing results to Council. Once Council has had an opportunity to provide feedback at the second scheduled Council meeting this week, staff will be publishing the results to the website for public viewing. Planning staff has also developed a new timeline and strategy to incorporate more public input on the Consolidated Draft. John Grego

said he was encouraged by how much information/comments staff took into consideration. RCCC needs to be sure they are on the Stakeholders list for future consideration.

### **Conservation Committee Report**

#### Land Development Code Comments

John planned on sharing additional comments and did a study but never called a meeting to review the comments. The Agricultural Overlay is the most concerning since it would include rural large lots and there are other suggestions that need to be shared. John found a good model for the type of consideration that needs to be given regarding the agricultural overlay and this could be shared quickly. Buddy said USDA Farm Service records (farm number) could be used to determine true-working farms (crops and timber) to be included in a protective agricultural overlay, as contrasted with a rural property with a house and a barn. The consensus of the Conservation Committee is that the water resource overlay needs to be deleted and incorporated into a unified single environmental-type overlay. The Charleston District of the US Army Corps of Engineers is interpreting the new Waters of the United States Rule to exclude many wetland areas which had been previously jurisdictional. This could have important negative consequences to wetlands protection in Richland County which could potentially be addressed within the new land development code. The consensus of the Committee is these areas are still expensive for developers and need to be preserved as a greenspace to reduce flooding, maintain water quality, and provide for recreation. Some type of incentives or credit system needs to be investigated similar to the current Open Space Development Code.

#### Conservation Land Acquisitions Update

##### *Spring Meadow*

This land donation is contingent upon a three-acre parcel owned by Blue Granite. Blue Granite had sought an agreement with the City of Columbia and Richland County regarding the construction of water and sewer infrastructure to serve 22 parcels adjacent to the potential land donation. However, no agreement has been reached which places the land donation in limbo. Follow up will be necessary to see if this can go forward.

##### *Lake Elizabeth*

The HOA has been informed that the RCCC is interested in the donation but are concerned about security issues caused by public access. Nancy and Quinton will reply to the security questions and the HOA has requested someone from the RCCC attend their November meeting. If these issues can be resolved then the HOA will proceed with the donation. John inquired if RCCC had the CLOMA issued from FEMA to address any downstream flooding issues. The flooding issues needs additional follow through.

### **Grant Allocation Discussion**

A suggestion to request Council increase the \$250,000 lump sum appropriation for grants was discussed. The RCCC grants amount is unchanged since 2013. A reduction in Professional Services and a reallocation to grants would be the most likely source for the additional funding. No additional increase in the 0.5 mill Special Revenue Fund is being requested. Any requested increase must be approved by the RCCC no later than November to allow staff to request the budget increase. In a year where budgets have been reduced and the impact of the pandemic on the economy is not known, Council may be averse to increasing the amount of the lump sum appropriation. After a brief discussion, the RCCC determined such a reallocation was not prudent at this time.

## **Conservation Manager's Report**

### *Walden Pond*

Work on the Project is well underway and the RCCC expects a report later this month or early November from the consultant. Carol suggested we reach out to the reporter regarding the article from the former Free Times - Post & Courier in Columbia to clarify issues regarding the October 2015 flood. Quinton will contact the author.

### *Cabin Branch Parcel*

Quinton called the realtor representing Horrell Hill Partnership (R24600-01-33) but has not spoken with him. Buddy said he knows the realtor and volunteered to speak with him. RCCC is interested in the parcel due to its conservation value and location adjacent to existing County-owned parcels. Buddy and Quinton will contact the realtor and report back to the RCCC.

### *Mill Creek*

John questioned the status on the bridge and roadwork repair at the Mill Creek property. Quinton explained staff was recently contacted by Procurement with questions regarding the project which have now been answered.

## **Conservation Coordinator's Report**

### Grants Budget Update

Nancy reported Councilwoman Terracio made a motion to restore \$37,561 to the historical grants program funding from the RCCC Reserve account. This matter will be referred to the A&F Committee for consideration. Several grantees have already requested payment and one project (Town Theatre) has already been completed. Nancy asked if Commissioners wanted to review the Quarterly Grant Reports; Charles requested those reports be provided to all Commissioners.

### Timberlane Tree Planting Update

Nancy spoke with Clayton after the September 21 meeting. Clayton contacted NC State University who suggested the Timberlane tree planting project could be handled by NC State graduate students. Nancy contacted Clemson University and spoke with two professors in Forestry and Environmental Conservation Department who expressed their interest. Professor Hagen was most interested and she said the project could be handled by one student. Planting season and the academic calendar would dictate the project's timeline. Nancy will be submitting two different options to Clayton for consideration. Option one would be for Procurement to advertise and hire a professional forester. Option two would be the graduate student approach. Nancy thinks the graduate student option would be the more expensive approach. Charles and Carol asked to see what is submitted to Clayton.

### Greenways

The Greenway Advisory Committee met on October 7. The Transportation Penny Program has hired a greenways subject matter expert. After two years all the paperwork has been signed by the City of Columbia and Richland County to reduce the width of the elevated greenway in Gills Creek (Ft. Jackson Boulevard & Michael Lane) from 14 feet to 12 feet. Carol questioned how the Timberlane tree planting proposal could connect with the Greenway and involvement with SCDOT.

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Rocky Branch and Crane Creek greenways are in the design phase. A hike is planned for RCCC Commissioners on October 30 at the Saluda River Greenway which is now unofficially open. The connection to Boyd Island remains incomplete.

*\*\* Sam made a motion and was seconded by Buddy to extend the meeting an additional five minutes. \*\**

Buddy inquired if the easements have been obtained for the greenways, especially Gills Creek. Quinton stated additional design work needs to be completed prior to obtaining easements.

Nancy said the Columbia Hospital Unit/Nurse Dormitory is being unveiled on Sunday. Details will be emailed. The Olympia School marker language has been disputed and will need to be resolved. The deadline for agreement on the marker language is October 2; If not, the marker will be cancelled.

Buddy has exchanged emails from incoming District 10 Councilwoman Rev. Cheryl English and Lee Rambo, former District 5 RCCC Commissioner. A zoom meeting is being planned to discuss the RCCC and Richland Soil and Water Conservation District programs.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.  
Respectfully submitted,  
Charlie Fisher