



2020 Hampton Street • Room 3063A
P.O. Box 192 • Columbia, SC 29202
(803) 576-2083

Minutes
September 16, 2019

Attendance:

Members present: John Grego, Charles Weber, Buddy Atkins, Jim Thomas, Virginia Sanders, Sam Holland, Tim McSwain, Robert Squirewell, and Glenice Pearson via telephone

Absent: Carol Kososki

Vacant: District 10

Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division
Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Division
Chris Hansen, Conservation Division
Charlie Fisher, Conservation Division
Ken Driggers, Contract Legal Counsel
Robert Reese, NAACP Lower Richland
Anne Marie Johnson, Volunteer at Pinewood Lake Park

Call to Order

Vice-Chair John Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30 with a quorum.

Approval of Agenda

Buddy Atkins made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by Tim McSwain. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Tim moved to approve the August 17 minutes as presented. Jim Thomas seconded the motion which carried.

Report of Chair

John read a letter from Andrea Williams who has regretfully resigned due to health issues. Commissioners requested staff send flowers to Andrea in appreciation for her service representing Council District 10. Virginia Sanders, Jim Thomas, Sam Holland, Carol Kososki, and Ken Driggers recently met with Leonardo Brown, the new County Administrator to acquaint him with RCCC's mission. Everyone was favorably impressed with Mr. Brown who explained he was process driven and people sensitive.

Treasurer's Report

Virginia referred everyone to their copy of the budget. Nancy Stone-Collum pointed out only one grant payment has been made and a grants summary sheet will be provided in October.

Community Planning & Development Report

Clayton Voignier was unable to attend but has promised to provide feedback on the Capital Improvement Plan process and the policy request that any revenue generated from conservation properties be returned to the Conservation Fund. Ken Driggers' contract extension will be on the agenda for the Administration and Finance Committee meeting on September 24.

Groundwork Trust Presentation

Robert Reese, President of the Lower Richland chapter of the NAACP, has taken on the challenge of proposing the creation of a Groundwork Trust organization for Richland County. Each year EPA and the National Park Service provide grant funding to establish one new non-profit to bring about the sustained regeneration, improvement, and management of the physical environment by developing community-based partnerships that empower people, business, and organizations to promote environmental, economic, and social well-being. The five main focus areas are: equity and inclusion; healthy communities; transforming brownfields; urban waters; youth development.

Mr. Reese submitted a letter of interest July 30 after speaking with many potential partners and stakeholders and was notified he had made the first cut. The letter referenced the Lower Richland Tourism Plan and the opportunities in it which match many of the goals of Groundwork Trust. Next step in the process is a phone interview and then a site visit, which if favorable, leads to the submission of a proposal. Robert has gotten funding commitments from the required elected officials and business entities – in this case Councilwoman Myers and Westinghouse. Virginia questioned accepting money from Westinghouse given their history of radioactive leaks and spills. Robert assured her other business partnerships will be sought. He said he'd asked Nancy to serve on the steering committee that will draft the proposal and he would like a letter of support from RCCC. Charles Weber made a motion for RCCC to provide a letter of support and was seconded by Tim. Motion passed unanimously.

Pinewood Lake Park

Pollinator Garden

Ann Marie Johnson retired from DHEC and now volunteers at the Park assisting with the pollinator garden. Managed (European honey bees) and wild (native) pollinators are responsible for every 1 in 3 bites of food but unfortunately they are currently in a significant decline. The reasons for decline include loss of habitat, pesticide use, invasives, and disease. After Charles, Tim, and staff prepared four beds, Ann Marie planted 31 species, mostly native, of flowers with a variety of shapes and bloom times from spring to fall to provide nectar. There are seven more beds that could be converted for more early spring floral resources and butterfly larval host plants. Seventy percent of native bees are ground-nesting and habitat could be created for them. Quinton said staff is looking for additional funds for educational signage/web presence and the seeding/planting of two more beds.

Summer Visitation Count

Chris Hansen reported on a visitation count during a seven day period with six hour intervals for a total of 46 hours. Amount of time spent on various activities was counted as well as number of people per vehicle. Fishing was the most popular activity as measured by time spent at the park; average length of a visit is twenty-nine minutes. With Buddy's help using seasonal activity data, the total annual number of park visitors is being computed.

Conservation Committee Report

Forest Stewardship Plan

The Conservation Committee recently met with Brandon Durant from American Forest Management (AFM) to discuss timelines, recommendations, and most important activities. John explained the reluctance of RCCC to proceed with improvements until there is resolution regarding where revenue generated from conservation lands is returned/accounted for. RCCC will need forest management expertise to carry out the various activities and Brandon explained how AFM could assist. The Committee endorsed the plan and found AFM had met the conditions of the request for proposals. Buddy stated the need to have the framework but adaptations should be expected in implementation. Charles made a motion seconded by Tim to approve the plan. Motion carried unanimously.

Conservation Division Manager's Report

Crickentree

Quinton reported he and Ken attended a meeting Wednesday with Councilwoman Dickerson, golf course landowner E-Capital, and the Crickentree HOA where he explained the easement process and that it couldn't be ready for third reading at the September 17 Council meeting. The landowner has proposed a 250 foot buffer around Crickentree which takes about 50 acres out of development. Tim stated there has been no action taken by the landowner to pursue an easement with RCCC despite a call from Ken to the E-Capital attorney in July. Options other than an easement are a set-back in the development permit or deed restrictions.

Ken explained the landowner anticipates they already have the votes they need and their proposed buffer will alleviate some of the pain over the property being developed. His opinion on an easement on the 250' buffer is there is no real conservation value although there is recreational value, and monitoring could be a nightmare. However, given the political realities, Ken thought it may be necessary to accept it but RCCC should communicate to Council not to put RCCC in the middle of these zoning conflicts again. Quinton reiterated that a set-back for open space is frequently done in the permitting stage and is the better option here rather than a conservation easement. Buddy argued against an easement.

Charles made a motion seconded by Tim to extend the meeting 15 minutes. Motion carried.

Tim pointed out that E-Capital, who offered the 250' buffer to resolve issues with Crickentree homeowners, will sell the land to a developer who has no agreement and can develop it without the buffer and to the highest number of houses allowed by the zoning ordinance. Charles mentioned RCCC has fourteen considerations for accepting a conservation easement and this property only has

two criteria that apply. Ken said a deed restriction is a better way to go. Commissioners reached a consensus of contacting their council member to request a delay of third reading since there is no plan in writing. In the event the rezoning can't be delayed, the 250' proposed buffer should be in a deed restriction.

Conservation Coordinator's Report

Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance

Council gave second reading to a plastic and paper bag ban ordinance on August 1 but recognized it should be put on hold until the public was educated on how the ban would work; thus delaying third reading until next July. Meanwhile a committee of county staff has begun work on developing an education campaign and potential changes to the ordinances. There are seventeen bag ban ordinances in the state, only two are inland – Camden and Arcadia Lakes. One advantage the committee will have is the RCCC conservation grant given to the SC Aquarium for their Plastic Pollution initiative.

October 21 Meeting

Everyone will meet at Mill Creek at 2:30 on October 21; a van/bus will convey members to different points of interest on the property. The meeting will convene at 3:45pm at the lodge and focus on the Lower Richland Tourism Plan and Capital Improvement Projects relating to the plan. A sign-up sheet was passed around for side dish contributions. Spouses are welcome but Nancy needs to be notified for head count purposes.

Updates

Nancy mentioned that in addition to the CO Spann Medical Office historic marker to be unveiled October 25, text for the 1900 block of Henderson Street marker has been approved, and an application for the United Order of Tents has been submitted. Markers for the Broad River and the Women's Club are likely to be funded this fiscal year. Nancy reminded members to RSVP to Historic Columbia or to her if they plan to attend the Modjeska Simkins Way dedication on Friday, September 20 at 6pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Fisher