



2020 Hampton Street · Room 3063A Columbia, SC 29204
(803) 576-2083
Minutes
February 27, 2023
4th Floor Conference Room

Attendance

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

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Val Morris	Conservation Division
Aric Jensen	County Administrator

Call to Order

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

Approval of Agenda

- ⇒ **Grego suggested amending the agenda by adding the Ag + Art Tour update under the Conservation Analyst Report. Stover moved to approve the agenda as amended which was seconded by Rodriquez. Motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Minutes

- ⇒ **Squirewell moved to approve the minutes which was seconded by Jackson. Motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan (LRTP) – update:** Grego reported the LRTP has been delayed from County Council agenda another month, stating it has been five months since the plan was sent on to the planning commission.

- **Land Development Code (LDC) – Letter for Council - action item:** Grego reported Richland County staff have been organizing meetings with various neighborhoods about LDC. McSwain stated he attended a meeting that Councilman Pugh and Mackey hosted in regards of the 90-acre tract of land in the Kelly Mill Road area. Eastwood Homes, the developers, had applied for a less dense development than could have been applied for, however, it was recommended by County staff to be developed at higher density. He expressed his disappointment in County staff for recommending higher density. The zoning commission did vote to approve developing the 90-acre tract of land as Eastwood home originally requested.
- **Greenway – update:** Grego reported there was a meeting with Greenway Advisory Committee last week and was updated on various greenways. Smith Branch Greenway is still moving slow however they are making progress and communicating more with the people involved with the Palmetto Trail. Saluda River Greenway organizers have a lot to do and are moving forward with all the necessary licensing and environmental studies to build the bridge connecting the Saluda Greenway with the Columbia Canal. The City of Columbia is moving forward with plans for Gills Creek Greenway. Several people from the Gills Creek Watershed Association are advocating for 8ft wide boardwalks but the City is set on having 12ft wide boardwalks.
- **Annual Work Plan – action:** Grego reported he will present the Annual Work Plan to County Council in March or when County Council adds the plan to their agenda. He stated that the Annual Work Plan explains funding and projects. He spoke about the LRTP which includes implementations of improving the roads and the bridge on the Mill Creek property and adding an advisory group for the small business development center in Lower Richland. The Heritage Tourisms Marketing plan will be completed this year and we hope to start implementing recommendations that arrive with the plan.

⇒ **Weber moved to accept the Annual Work Plan which was seconded by Gallman. Motion passed unanimously.**

- **Attendance:** Grego reported RCCC staff takes attendance for all RCCC meetings. He gave a synopsis of the attendance policy and noted that it is a county wide policy and not a commission policy. The policy states a commissioner cannot be absent 50% or more over a two-year period of the monthly meetings.
- **Outstanding District Employee for SCACD – update:** Grego acknowledged Epps on being recognized as the Outstanding District Employee for SCACD during a conference which was held in Greenville, SC in January, 2023. Epps reported he was given a desk plaque for his recognition and councilwoman Chakisse Newton also recognized him at a County Council meeting.
- **Advocacy – discussion:** Gallman, Grego, Stover and McSwain reported they spoke with their councilmembers about various topics such as grants presentations, remaining chair of the commission and dual offices, respectively. McSwain reported he sent a letter to the Attorney General requesting their opinion about his dual positions with Richland Soil Water District (RSWD) and Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC). The letter stated that this is a unique situation with Richland County and advised it would be a conflict of interest to serve dual

positions. McSwain reported he will resign his position with RCCC and has found a replacement to fill his seat. They will meet with his councilmember, Derek Pugh, within the coming days.

Report from Community Planning and Development

- **Land Development Code-Remapping Restart – update:** Jensen reported only yet having one meeting with the residents in Ballentine which was well attended. Most of their questions centered on the maps. Residents wanted to know what zone they were in based upon the planning commission recommended maps. Jensen continued to say some residents were adamant and wanted to quickly eliminate two, three and four family units to the single-family zones. He explained that it couldn't be done quickly due to the readings and the approval process with County Council. On the 28th of March there will be an informational meeting with County Council to give updates only. Between now and then they plan on having more community meetings to gather further information with the hopes of having the first reading by the end of April or the beginning of May. Lastly, Jensen reported there was a focus group in the Lower Richland Community created by councilwomen English and Newton. The group was asked to give their opinions about AG, HM-RT, the densities the planning commission recommended and recommendations of having 35 acres or larger zoned agriculture and 3 to 35 acres zoned homestead. In the end the focus group recommended minimum one-acre size lots or three quarters acre lots.

Treasurer's Report

- **FY22 General Budget status – update** Squirewell reported no significant changes since last month's report.

Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) Report

- **HPC Grant Recommendations – presentation:** Gallman reported six out of the seven grants were approved by HPC. They were various projects including documentaries, reprinting of books, and windows restorations. The award total amount recommended by HPC is \$138,490.00.
- **Heritage Tourism Marketing Plan – update:** No updates.

Natural Resources Committee (NRC) Report

- **NRC Grant Recommendations – presentation:** Weber reported there were two applicants for the NRC grants, Camp Discovery and Stormwater Studios. The award total amount recommended by NRC is \$40,000.00.
- **Mill Creek Bridge – update:** Epps reported County Council has approved the purchase. The next step is to get a budget amended which will require three readings and a public hearing.
- **Columbia Rowing Club – work in progress/no action taken**
- **Bates Old River – Work in progress.**

- **Mitigation Bank Credits – update:** Epps reported there were no changes. There was revenue received which he will report in next month’s meeting.

FY23-24 RCCC Grant Recommendations

⇒ **Weber moved to accept the recommendations of the HPC and NRC for the grants, which was seconded by DePaoli. Motion passed unanimously.**

Conservation Program Analyst’s Report

- **FY 22-23 RCCC Grants – update:** McKenzie presented a spreadsheet showing the progress of the FY22-23 grants. He stated two grant recipients have completed their projects and all other recipients are on task.
- **Conservation Easement – update:** McKenzie reported monitoring of all 32-conservation easements is complete. One easement has a new property owner and he’s communicating with the owner to make them aware of the easement. The drone pilot program is helping with getting better views of the properties.
- **Ag + Art Tour – update:** McKenzie shared a report from the Ag + Art Tour committee which showed the start date of the tour, potential farm sites, artisans, fundraising, sponsor recognitions and various other items.
- **Events – update:** McKenzie reminded everyone of the Cottontown Art Crawl which will take place on March 11, 2023. He also reported he will attend the State House for an event about Rosenwald Schools. Stover also conveyed he was attending the event at the State House. Stover shared with the commissioners he was educated at a Rosenwald School in Kershaw County and now owns the Rosenwald School he attended as a child. Gallman stated she attended the Green Book signing event which was well-attended; they had about 50-75 people and sold out of books.

Conservation Manager’s Report

- **Annual budget submission – update:** Epps reported every year, in January, the annual budget is submitted to Administration and everything remained the same with the exception of over a million dollars in Professional Services including \$585,000 for historic projects and \$700,000 for the Mill Creek bridge replacement project as well as nearly \$2 million for potential acquisitions. These funds will be drawn from the RCCC Reserve Fund. Additionally, staff has and will apply for grants ranging from \$525,000 to \$1.5 million to offset the County’s costs for these projects. Epps explained the process for approval of the County budget which includes three readings and a public hearing by County Council with administration noting the final approval will happen in June of 2023.
- **Staff vacancies – update:** Epps stated he has three applicants for the Land Program Planner position. He has scheduled an interview with one and will review the other candidate’s applications to see if they qualify.

New Business

- Weber reported NRC will be meeting on March 7, 2023 at 2:00pm. McKenzie reported he will share attendance with commissioners per their request.

Public Input: None

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