



2020 Hampton Street • Room 3063A  
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(803) 576-2083

## Minutes May 18, 2015

### Attendance:

Members present: John Grego, Glenice Pearson, Jim Thomas, Charles Weber, Sam Holland, Virginia Sanders, and Jennifer Myers

Absent: Carol Kososki, Ann Furr, Becky Bailey, Margaret DuBard

### Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Department  
Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Department  
Charlie Fisher, Conservation Department  
Ken Driggers, Contract Legal Counsel  
Sparty Hammett, Richland County Assistant Administrator

Vice-chair John Grego called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

**Agenda:** Charles Weber moved and Glenice Pearson seconded the motion to approve the agenda. Motion was approved.

**Minutes:** Charles moved to approve the minutes of April 27, 2015. Virginia Sanders seconded the motion which carried.

### FY16 Budget

Sparty Hammett explained it has been progressively more difficult to balance the budget for the last several years. Due to the slow recovery, increased employee health insurance costs, and reduced local government funds from the state (for mandated programs), the county fund balance was used to make up revenue shortfalls. This year the fund balance is down to the 20% minimum that must be maintained and is therefore not available as a funding source. County Council requested Administration submit a flat budget which resulted in the proposal to fund two positions for Facilities and Grounds out of the RCCC budget costing approximately \$100,000. Another budget option Administration discussed but rejected was reducing RCCC's millage from .5 to .4, a \$145,000 impact. Sparty said funding the new positions versus the millage decrease would be preferable since the millage decrease could be difficult to increase whereas the positions could possibly be moved to a General Fund department's budget in the future.

All General Fund departments have been cut 1% across the board. Despite the difficult financial situation no employee reductions or furloughs are planned. Council could consider a second proposal which would increase taxes to the millage cap allowed by Act 388 and provide \$2 million or \$3.2 million if the rollback cap is used. Sparty encouraged everyone to lobby their state legislators to fund Senate Bill 473 to fully restore local government funding over a three year time period.

Commission members expressed much unhappiness with the budget proposal. They disputed the rationale that RCCC should fund the positions for properties the county has acquired like Pinewood Lake Park, Mill Creek, and Hopkins tract because RCCC is not responsible for maintenance, would have no oversight of the employees, and is not consistent with the mission. John said the diversion of funds equals an eleven percent cut. Charles suggested the county reduce travel and training budgets. Glenice Pearson said the Commission was too vulnerable and needed protection from being raided. Nancy reminded everyone of a prior reduction from the acquisition fund and the assumption of Soil and Water District expenses. A fact sheet was requested and members were urged to contact their council representatives.

Second reading of the budget will take place May 28 and June 4 with the third and final reading on June 11. Sparty announced he will be stepping down as Assistant County Administrator as of September 18.

#### **Historic Committee Report**

Nancy reported there were two proposals submitted for the historic initiative; one was disqualified due to instructions not being followed. Glenice, Quinton, and Nancy met to evaluate the remaining applicant on May 5 and determined the company did not meet the criteria of the proposal. Procurement was to issue a notice of no award; however, Nancy just learned another evaluation statement must be submitted first; the request for proposals can then be reissued. Glenice voiced her displeasure with the process, questioned why we would go through the process again hoping for a different outcome, and stated her belief this should be a sole source procurement. Nancy and Glenice will schedule a meeting with Cheryl Patrick, Richland County's Procurement Director, to see how this can be resolved.

#### **Conservation Committee Report**

Deferred until after Director's Report/ ran out of time.

#### **Conservation Director's Report**

Quinton reported the \$100,000 funding from the City of Columbia for stormwater improvements at Owens Field has been received. The final mitigation banking instrument for the Mill Creek Mitigation Bank has been submitted for Army Corps of Engineers review. The Cabin Branch Conservation Corridor was approved by Council. Staff will be developing a plan to meet with landowners to discuss conservation easements.

Glenice asked Nancy about a comment she'd made at a Lower Richland meeting concerning the county's interest in helping resolve heirs' property issues. Nancy explained heirs' property problems were one aspect of the rural land preservation plan being developed. Quinton and Nancy have both talked with Sam Cook from the Center for Heirs' Property in Charleston to begin discussions about whether a similar program would be viable in Richland County. Glenice mentioned that SC Uplift Community Outreach has experience with heirs' property.

**Conservation Coordinator's Report**

Nancy will visit property Mr. Hopkins owns on Myers Creek for a potential easement. Another landowner has 200 acres on Twenty-five Mile Creek that may be interested in a conservation easement. Council's work session on FY16 grants went relatively smoothly. Pinewood Lake Park (formerly Caughman Pond) had a grand opening on Saturday, May 16. There are several nice shelters but no restrooms at this time (planned for Phase II). Nancy has requested City of Columbia preservationists come out to look at several of the old outbuildings. RCCC was well represented at the April 30 screening of the ETV documentary, "Down on Bull Street" which was very well done. Everyone has an opportunity to participate in the Rocky Shoals Spider Lily trip on May 22, either by kayak or ATV.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant