



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

Minutes August 19, 2019

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Charles Weber, Buddy Atkins, Sam Holland, and Tim McSwain

Absent: Andrea Williams, Jim Thomas, Robert Squirewell, Glenice Pearson, Virginia Sanders

Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division
Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Division
Chris Hansen, Conservation Division
Charlie Fisher, Conservation Division
Clayton Voignier, Community Planning & Development Department
Synithia Williams, Public Works Dept. / Stormwater Division
Geo Price, Community Planning & Development

Call to Order

Chair Carol Kososki welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:32 with a quorum.

Approval of Agenda

John Grego made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by Charles Weber. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Charles moved to approve the June 17 minutes as presented. Tim McSwain seconded the motion which carried.

Report of Chair

Carol indicated she would make her comments on agenda items during the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Nancy Stone-Collum stated very little had been spent or encumbered in the new FY20 budget. Charles questioned if the fund balance from FY19 had been transferred to the Conservation Fund. Carol said there hadn't been enough time yet to close out the FY19 books.

Forest Stewardship Plan Report

Brandon DuRant, Farm Manager for American Forest Management (AFM) gave a presentation on the Forest Stewardship Plan he wrote for Mill Creek and Cabin Branch. He said the 10-year stewardship plan for the properties has an enormous potential for recreation, conservation and natural resource development. A full baseline inventory assessment of the properties was done to determine habitat conditions, delineate management units, and provide a valuation of pine stands. Management recommendations, strategies, and timelines have been provided as well as alternatives of what can be done with the property. AFM used a team approach and sound science to make their recommendations.

Among the recommendations for Cabin Branch are:

- Thin the 40-acre loblolly pine stand to a 50 basal area, defined as the average amount of an area (usually an acre) occupied by tree stems
- Install firebreaks
- Treat privet within three years
- Develop a park with walking trail on the parcel where magistrate's office is to be built
- Install gates along entrances off Air Base Road to prevent illegal dumping and reduce liability
- Convert fallow ag fields to longleaf pine or lease for farming
- Create 2-acre openings to provide transitional wildlife habitat for bottomland song birds

AFM did not find much potential for mitigation on Cabin Branch.

The Upper Mill Creek tract (North) has significant timber resources that will generate revenue. Pine stands can be thinned to a 50 basal area and fire breaks installed. Walking trails, elevated tent camp sites, and an outdoor classroom were suggested. On both the North and South units, AFM recommended installing bluebird, bat, and duck boxes, creating pollinator and native warm-season grass plots in some of the existing food plots, and clearing small patches for bottomland song birds.

Carol asked Brandon what was the most important step to take and he replied putting up gates on Air Base and Horrell Hill roads should be the first action to prevent further dumping. Quinton said the full report would be made available to commissioners on a Dropbox site.

Land Development Manual

Synithia Williams reported not much has changed since her February presentation. The proposal to change the water quality buffers has been dropped. The requirement for downstream analysis is to ensure that developers don't make things worse. The Building Industry Association still has concerns about road design requirements and project closeout procedures that will take more discussion. Buddy Atkins asked how the downstream analysis determines there will be no further degradation. Synithia replied the analysis will extend to a specific point of concern in the watershed or use the 10% rule. (The 10% rule is the point downstream where the drainage area controlled by the detention on their site compromises only 10% of the total drainage area.) The language mimics Greenville County's ordinance. Buddy also asked about how the water quality standard for 85% removal of total suspended solids post-construction is determined. Synithia explained the IDEAL (Integrated Design and Assessment for Environmental Loadings) model will be used to calculate the pollutant efficiency of their Best Management Practices and treatment systems. Geo Price will provide the updated draft manual to Quinton later in the week and RCCC comments are requested within two weeks.

Community Planning & Development Report

Clayton Voignier said he spoke with the Budget Manager today and was told an email will go out to everyone who submitted Capital Improvement Project (CIP) requests. A new list will be prioritized and submitted to Council. Carol expressed her surprise that Council members were not aware of RCCC requested projects when they took up the list submitted by Administration during the budget discussions.

Conservation Committee Report

Crickentree

There has been no word from E-Capital about a conservation easement with RCCC for 60-70 acres of the golf course to buffer Crickentree homeowners. It is possible E-Capital is working with another land trust. Third reading for rezoning from Traditional Recreation Open Space to Residential-Low Density is scheduled for September 17.

Congaree Biosphere Update

John explained Congaree National Park was successful on their second attempt to renew the International Biosphere Reserve designation initially granted in 1983. Of the 47 national parks that had the designation only 29 (62%) were renewed. While the UNESCO designation was originally honorific, the goal now is to be more aspirational and have partners and stakeholders discuss a much larger area than just the park. Now a multi-county area, the vision is to coordinate land development, planning, conservation and preservation efforts among the governmental entities. Three different stakeholder meetings to discuss the Biosphere were held at the park in July and August. John, Andrea Williams, Nancy, and Quinton attended. Discussions revolved around the purpose and goals, an advisory committee to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, and what responsibilities and commitment that entailed. Details need to be fleshed out before John is ready to bring a recommendation back to the Commission.

A new stakeholder at the meetings was Robert Reese, president of the Lower Richland NAACP. He is applying to create a Groundwork Trust organization in Richland County. National Park Service and EPA fund one new organization per year whose purpose is to transform the natural and built environment of low-resource communities. He will find out in September if his grant application made the first cut. Mr. Reese, who has financial support from Councilwoman Dalhi Myers for the Groundwork Trust organization, is very interested in the Lower Richland Tourism Plan and sees good opportunities to engage Lower Richland communities in the vision.

Conservation Division Manager's Report

Greenway Funds Reprogramming Update

Quinton said the expectation is Council will address the greenway funds reprogramming at the September 10 meeting; RCCC has sent two memos to Council on the issue. If it is not on the agenda, it should be taken up by the Transportation Ad Hoc Committee on September 24. Carol and Nancy attended the last Greenways Advisory Meeting with the Transportation Penny Project Development Team (PDT). The PDT is out of business November 1 when the County Transportation Department takes over full responsibility for all penny projects. Carol urged the PDT to convey to Michael Niermeier the importance of continuing the citizens' Greenway Advisory Committee. She asked Quinton to bring this up with the Transportation Director as a group that brings institutional knowledge, greenway expertise, and political advocacy which will help avoid more stalls, stops, and missteps. The Saluda River Greenway is still several months away from completion. City of Columbia staff has indicated a willingness to make an exception from the 14' trail width for Gills Creek Greenway A to 12'. This will extend the length of the boardwalk but it will take

several months for the exception to be approved. Sam Holland expressed the need for the Transportation Department to have someone on staff with greenway expertise.

Driggers Contract Update

In the past, the contact between RCCC and Ken Driggers for legal services has been approved by the Legal Department and signed by the County Administrator. This year, Administration has decided the contract must be approved by County Council. Quinton will be submitting the briefing document and agreement to Clayton to begin the process of sending it through committee to get to the Council agenda, hopefully by October. Buddy questioned why a contract of this size had to be approved by Council but the only explanation is that all of the Administration staff is completely new from previous years, prompting the change in how to handle the contract.

Pinewood Lake Park Update

Chris Hansen said he was working on compiling the data from the recent summer visitation study and the winter visitation study to determine an accurate count for the year. Local residents are showing lots of interest in what is going on at the Park. Reservations for picnic shelters and people interested in using the space continue to be high. The pollinator garden is doing well and RCCC members are encouraged to drop by to enjoy the garden. The ultimate goal is to have community involvement with the garden in the future. There has not been any contact from the Foundation but at some point, the inventory issue may come up again.

Conservation Coordinator's Report

Quinton and Nancy met with Phil Gaines, former Director of SC State Park Service, at the Mill Creek property last Friday. Mr. Gaines said the property is beautiful but there are lots of challenges due to the amount of wetlands. He suggested hiring an engineer to determine high ground where buildings could be constructed, how and where to place drain fields and/or lift stations, and the levels of upgrades various roads will need.

Everyone was referred to their copy of the final report of the FY19 grants. RSWCD has invited RCCC members to join them for their September 9 tour of the county's Broad River Waste Water Treatment Plant. The dedication of Modjeska Simpkins Way will be September 20 from 6-7:30pm. Two researching your historic home workshops will be held by grantees. The SC Aquarium grantee will hold a plastic pollution workshop at the zoo on October 24. The following day will be the unveiling of the CO Spann Medical Office historical marker.

Nancy inquired if October 21 would be a suitable date for RCCC members to meet at Mill Creek early in the afternoon for a tour, commission meeting, and a cook-out. All agreed this was a good idea.

Charles commented that after listening to Brandon's report on the Forest Stewardship Plan, time needed to be spent to determine where we go from here. This should take place sooner rather than later. Carol asked the Conservation Committee to meet to make recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Fisher