



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

**Minutes
 June 21, 2021**

Attendance

Commissioner	District	Present
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	Yes
Sam Holland	3	Yes
Glenice Pearson	4	Yes
Buddy Atkins	5	No
John Grego	6	Yes
Robert Squirewell	7	Yes
Carol Kososki	8	Yes
Vacant	9	--
Darrell Jackson, Jr	10	Yes
Gail Rodriguez	11	Yes

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Chanda Cooper	Conservation Division
Annette House	Building Inspections Division
Meghan Sullivan	Planning Services Division
Brian Crooks	Planning Services Division
Charlene Fisher	Visitor
Jonathan Fletcher	Columbia Rowing Club

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:35 pm. All members, staff, and guests participated by Zoom video conference due to the closure of County offices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approval of Agenda

- ⇒ **Kosowski moved to approve the agenda and amend the agenda to allow remarks from the Columbia Rowing Club after the report of the Chair and to amend the Houck item to an action item which was seconded by Rodriguez. The motion passed unanimously.**
- ⇒ **McSwain moved to approve the April Special Called Meeting, April and May Meeting Minutes which was seconded by Rodriguez. The motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **FY22 Administrator recommended budget** – Grego stated it’s still not clear if the funds that accumulated from the transfer in to the special revenue fund balance will be taken away. The Administrator did not address what will be done with the balance.

Kosowski stated we may need to complain about it if it doesn’t go favorably as it is a large sum of money. We are already starting with a loss of \$100,000 from the fund balance (payment on the Mill Creek tract); the best case scenario with a gain of \$270,000 based upon what happens with the unspent money coming out of the general fund

from the various years.

Grego stated it is frustrating; looking at the transfer in budget, it is personnel, operations, and maintenance; basically keeping the lights on. With full staffing, there would not be much to save and carry forward.

Kososki stated wait a while longer; she asked Epps what is the end of the year process.

Epps stated they have never had anything this dramatic in terms of budget changes except when we received the additional \$144,000.

Grego stated it was a pleasant surprise the first time when it wasn't transferred back into general funds.

Epps stated yes. Grego stated it would be odd for Administration to reach back in the pot, and was not sure if they would do that.

Kososki stated that was something Lori Thomas was advocating; retroactively back to 2018 and the years in between; that money needs to go back to the overall fund balance of the County. Kososki is not certain if Lori Thomas will be doing that or is it strictly a Finance job. She didn't know how that will be accomplished.

Grego stated Kenny Mullis sent out some thank you notes to Administrator Brown and County Council in general on behalf of the District. Grego stated he did not think that the thank you notes would seem sincere coming from the Commission and wanted to know the thoughts of others.

Pearson stated she agreed with that and is prepared to speak on some concerns she has once they get to this recommendation or the item on the agenda about the Lower Richland Tourism Plan. She'd rather talk about it within the context of the item on the agenda. She definitely feels that the Commission needs to talk more about some things that they need to do that came up from her point of view during the course of this process-she really feels they need to be addressed as a Commission. Pearson stated she will not be supportive of them following Mullis' moves in regards to that; she saw his message; she stated "I don't think we are there."

Kososki added she sent out a personal note on behalf of herself to people who had done particularly good work.

Pearson stated she has sent out personal notes to people thanking them individually, not on behalf of the Commission. She felt that is important especially for those of us that may have enlisted help of specific people to let them know how much we appreciate their involvement and how really deep many of them went in their support of our work. She stated as a Commission, we are not there.

- **Land Development Code (LDC)**

Grego stated he distributed a draft letter for review and wanted to discuss the tone of the letter.

Pearson stated she read the letter; has no comments and is not familiar with the Land Development Code process.

Grego stated the letter is ready to go on short notice, he's in need of an endorsement of a final draft.

- **Ordinance Review-discussion**

Grego went over the RCCC ordinance and an annual plan is to be submitted to County Council, he encouraged all to look over the ordinance. The Commission presented an argument that Administration did not follow through all the dictates of the ordinance. Administration argued the Commission did not do everything they were supposed to do.

Kososki added this could be a plus, since an annual plan is needed and attached to the budget. That would really help the Commission explain who they are and what their mission is.

Grego stated they put a lot of effort into trying to get the Council to understand what we did with our budget.

Pearson stated there's another layer of communication that we need to make to County Council members in light of their lack of apparent knowledge about our work. Pearson also added she believes there is some work that has not been done that we are in charge of doing and we are way behind. Despite the budget issues, County Council members need to be made aware of the fact that there are major gaps in areas of the work this Commission is in charge of in accordance with the ordinance.

Rodriguez stated County Council needs to see annually the deficiency in our ability to complete our plans.

Pearson agreed stating there is a major deficit in some areas that the Commission cannot address with the current level of funding.

- **Departing comments from the former Richland County Conservation Commission Chair Carol Kososki
June 21, 2021**

As most of you know, today is my last day with the Richland County Conservation Commission. Councilman Jim Manning, my sponsor on Council retired in December. I announced my retirement from the Commission to coincide with his departure but have stayed on for the past 6 months to give time to identify my replacement. I believe he will soon make that announcement.

What will stand out in my heart and mind as I look back over the last 15 years of working with the Richland County Conservation Commission? You do. You the people who care about conservation in Richland County stand out in my heart and mind.

I wish to thank the people I have worked with daily throughout the years. Thank you Quinton Epps, Nancy Stone-Collum, John Grego and Buddy Atkins. I wish to thank the Council members who supported our work and on whose help I could always rely- Jim Manning, Greg Pearce and Chip Jackson. I wish to thank the people whose opinions I value greatly and whose advice I frequently sought: Charles Weber, Tim McSwain, Sam Holland, Glenice Pearson, Robert Squirewell, Gail Rodriguez, Ken Driggers, Virginia Sanders, Kenny Mullis, Chanda Cooper and my husband John.

The times shared, friendships made and successes we have enjoyed have been a major part of my life. I am very proud of what we have achieved in conversation of natural resources and in preservation of historical and cultural resources. Each and every achievement has been an important part of my life and I will never forget.

Now for the future. The past six months of fighting for the restoration of our 2022 budget to FY 2021 levels has also been an ordeal not to be forgotten. Lessons learned should be taken to heart:

- 1. Establish at least one (preferably two or more) conservation champions on Council who will carry the conservation banner. These champions should be willing to be available on short notice to provide Council related assistance as needed. An example of this assistance is the effort of Allison Terracio, working with Buddy Akins and interfacing with Administration and Council during the critical second and third readings of the FY22 budget. A formal Council conservation liaison with the RCCC must be named to replace Chip Jackson. Past Council liaisons with the RCCC include Chip Jackson and Jim Manning.*
- 2. Establish a conservation plan updated annually to form the basis for our budget. This is how members of County Council understand who we are and comprehend our mission. It is top requirement of our enabling ordinance.*
- 3. Start work early on the budget. Determine priorities early which are evident in the plan and emphasized in the budget. (Regarding the budget, attention should be given to both the monetary aspects and the head count). Work monthly to refine the budget document before it goes to Council. (The importance of timing can be seen in the following example: in order to increase the submittal time must be reflected in the total overall recommended budget amount. Otherwise, RCCC will be unable to move above the current \$250,000 ceiling).*

Finally, the RCCC must deliver a FY2023 budget that reaches Council as required by law.

4. *Keep a close eye on the fund balance and identify new sources of funding.*

Action should be taken to assure budgeting and charging expenditures to the proper key code to maximize safeguarding of fund balance. As an example, interest on the \$1.5M liability for the Mill Creek mortgage should be budgeted and charged to the Upper Mill Creek key code instead of to the ½ mil conservation code.

In light of the recent receipt of \$40,000,000 by Richland County from the American Rescue Plan federal law and with another \$40,000,000 to come to the County, attention should be focused on new sources of funding for RCCC projects. Can this or other funding sources be used to finance the RCCC proposed Lower Richland Tourism Plan? Bridge rebuild? Entrance road to permit Mill Creek tract access?

5. *And most importantly, unfilled staff positions must be filled if our mission is to succeed.*

That's all. I could not have made it through my 15 years at RCCC without your dedication and work. I wish all of you every success for the future.

⇒ **Weber moved to add Kososki's written comments to the minutes which was seconded by Holland. Motion passed unanimously.**

- **Columbia Rowing Club**

Jonathan Fletcher explained that CRC is not a private club and they are registered with the IRS as a public nonprofit. They have retrieved enough sections of the old dock to construct an EZ dock.

A new design will assure two essential requirements

- The connections are sufficiently overbuilt to withstand the most severe flood conditions.
- Replacement will not cost Richland County anything.

Additional notes from the presentation:

- Permitting: May fall under exemption (Reg.19-450.3)
- Short-term dock solution should not require any new permitting
- Grounded ramp (original ramp secured to ground in depression)
- Removable, inflatable, lightweight launching sections.
- Small transition ramp from grounded ramp to inflatable sections.
- Ultimate goal, if possible: Allow CRC to bear all financial, liability and maintenance responsibility for the grounds, boathouse and dock.

The original Agnew dock was attached to the land; CRC EZ dock will have no upstream anchor and using Proposal #4 includes stiff-arms, landsides piles, and an upstreaming ramp.

Treasurer's Report

- **FY21 General budget status- update**

Epps stated the budget remains the same as it was last month; the significant change, the design for the Mill Creek Bridge was approved. Procurement changed the PO to the vendor that was selected to reflect the \$250,000.00. \$31,000 came from Acquisition to complete the \$250,000 for the design. The rest of the budget is largely unchanged from what it was.

Kososki asked Epps if this is being charged to the Mill Creek general fund key code. It's very important to get that charged to that key code as opposed to Conservation in general.

Epps stated it is not being charged to the Mill Creek fund; Hayes (Budget Director) told Epps it is all in the ½ mill key code ending in 1000, they separate Cabin Branch and Mill Creek and Pinewood Lake Park for our benefit into 1001 & 1002.

Kososki stated it shouldn't be against the ½ mill; it should be against general fund money, so the Commission could account for the total general fund monies that come to us for Mill Creek, Cabin Branch and Pinewood Lake Park. It is important for the key code to include this expenditure to reflect the cost of maintaining these properties. Otherwise, we know what will happen-the Commission won't get credit for it. It will lower the fund balance against the ½ mill.

Epps agreed.

Kososki suggested that it be brought up once again; if they give us the money, as they have in the third reading, the Commission got the transfer in. We ought to be using it. Maybe by bringing it up again, we may get some depth and understanding on county administration's part.

Epps stated he will speak with James Hayes.

Weber asked if this is money the Commission is spending right now?

Epps stated yes.

Weber stated the budget is next year and didn't want to mix the two up.

Kososki had several questions in regards to reallocating the funds from Salary and Wages.

Epps informed her that a transfer could not be done from the Salary and Wages.

Report of the Community Planning & Development Department

- **Land Development Code-update**

Crooks stated Council deferred action on the Land Development Code rewrite until August in order to allow for some more in person meetings; which hasn't met in person since March of last year. All engagements have been in person with a limited number of one-on-one meetings, since we haven't been able to have large Community meetings out in the public. Council deferred action to allow more community meetings out in the public; he anticipates having those within the next couple of months before they take action sometime after August for the Land Development Code rewrite. It was presented to the Planning Commission and passed with a couple of changes to approve the Land Development Code. These changes are being added in and it will be forwarded to Council by the end of this week or next week; also it will be added to the department's webpage with the Planning Commission recommended code. Crooks also stated the text may not get adopted until October or November at the latest and from there we will go through the mapping portion following the adoption of the text. Overall, we are looking at a two- month delay in regards to Council action on the code rewrite.

Grego asked if the Planning Commission recommendations were modest.

Crooks stated they are modest.

Weber asked if there was a date when the new proposed zoning maps will be available.

Crooks answered, that may be late fall or winter of this year due to the delay.

Grego asked if there has been a recorded public hearing.

Crooks stated there has not been a public hearing; only the Planning Commission meeting, which is public. The meeting scheduled for Thursday has been deferred; all actions on the Land Development rewrite have been deferred.

Conservation Committee Report

- **Ganus easement- update**

Epps stated they are still working with Legal; Elizabeth in Legal stated she did not have time and assigned an attorney from Haynesworth Sinkler Boyd to work with him on this. They are working on recommendations and can bring them back to the Commission when they are finalized.

- **Houck easement- update**

Epps stated he and Atkins went out and talked to Mr. Houck; they both think that this is something that they should pursue. Mr. Houck wants the property to be eased.

⇒ Grego moved to proceed with Mr. Houck, seconded by Weber. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Cabin Branch-update**

Epps stated he has not been able to get an appraiser on board, he is still working on it and is running out of time.

Rodriguez motioned to extend the minutes by 15 minutes, seconded by Holland.

⇒ Grego moved to go into Executive Session to discuss contractual matters related to a potential property purchase, which was seconded by Kososki. The motion passed unanimously.

Recording stopped

- Executive Session-contractual matters for property purchase

Grego stated no action was taken during Executive Session.

Adjournment

⇒ Grego moved to adjourn which was seconded by Kososki. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 5:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette House.