



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

Minutes
March 16, 2020

Attendance

Commissioner	District	Present
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	Yes
Sam Holland	3	Yes
Vacant	4	--
Buddy Atkins	5	Yes*
John Grego	6	Yes*
Robert Squirewell	7	Yes*
Carol Kososki	8	Yes
Jim Thomas	9	On leave
Vacant	10	--
Gail Rodriguez	11	Yes*
* via telephone		

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Nancy Stone-Collum	Conservation Division
Charlie Fisher	Conservation Division
Allison Terracio*	County Council District 5

Call to Order

Chair Carol Kososki called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:30pm.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

Charles made a motion to approve the minutes of February 10, 2020 and was seconded by Tim McSwain. Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report

No report

Report of the Community Planning & Development Director

Clayton notified staff he is out of the office until March 24 but is available by email. We have not received a response to the questions put before him by the Executive Committee in an email dated March 9 and listed on the agenda.

Report of the Chair

Following the February RCCC meeting, Carol sent a letter dated Feb. 19 (letter on file) to Clayton asking three questions: 1) what is the timeline for filling the Land Program Planner position; 2) who will be involved in

interviewing the top candidates; and 3) when will the time management study be concluded. No response has been received.

Having written to County Administrator Brown requesting an update on the meeting held in his office on January 21, Carol read his reply of February 24 (letter on file). Mr. Brown replied about Charlie's position: "Currently, I have not authorized my staff to take any implementation steps; and to date, I am not aware of any proposed operational changes that have been implemented." He asked for flexibility but looks forward to meeting in a more personal setting.

Subsequently, Carol and Kenny Mullis, Chair of Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD), had a lengthy meeting with Mr. Brown on March 10 and discussed in detail the concerns RCCC and RSWCD share. The Administrator discussed his decision making process and a performance wheel, saying only he has the authority to hire and fire. They asked Mr. Brown the status of the Capital Improvement Projects process. None of the RCCC capital improvement projects for the Lower Richland Tourism Plan were submitted by Administration to County Council. Mr. Brown said he would speak to his staff to provide an explanation.

Carol explained that information does not seem to flow as it has in the past, either negative or positive. Blockages occur and it is often difficult to understand what decisions have been made and why. She asked questions about the filling of the Land Program Planner position which is critical for Pinewood Lake Park and Upper Mill Creek – why has there been no action on the recommended applications, who will be involved with the interviews, and what is the process for selection. Carol also questioned the purpose and intent of the time management study – how much longer need it continue, why is professional staff involved in the study, are any other staff completing time logs. Mr. Brown asked to be given time to pursue this with his staff. Kenny brought up the delay in getting approvals to accept two grants RSWCD was awarded. By the end of the week Mr. Brown had given approval for the Seed Library grant and requested Councilwoman Newton weigh in on the Urban Agriculture grant to expand the pollinator garden at Pinewood Lake Park. Gail Rodriguez was able to talk with Ms. Newton who gave her approval to implement the grant.

Buddy reiterated the need to fill the Land Program Planner position and argued the time management logs should be concluded as they are time intensive, burdensome, and no analysis is being done with the data. Charles, referring to the Feb 6 email from Clayton, pointed out the vacancy issue lies with Mr. Brown and/or Assistant County Administrator Ashley Powell. Tim McSwain interpreted the email differently as in Clayton is unwilling to discuss the position with RCCC. Charles said he had not signed the Roles and Responsibilities form for this year because he is prevented by Administration from fulfilling his duties. Sam Holland pointed out how routine it is to fill a position so why this inordinate delay. John Grego suggested a letter offering a resolution to the impasse on filling the position while Sam proposed giving Mr. Brown a few weeks to respond. Charles moved, seconded by Tim, to ask the Executive Committee to review the vacant position issue in 10 days to two weeks and if necessary, send a follow-up letter. Motion carried unanimously.

Historic Committee Grant Recommendations

Sam gave a brief overview of the 12 applications received which totaled \$445,401 and made a recommendation to fund eight projects for \$207,561. Charles made a motion to accept the Committee's recommendation and was seconded by Tim. Motion carried unanimously.

Conservation Committee Grant Recommendations

John Grego reported the Committee received four applications for a total of \$42,439 and recommended fully funding all the requests. Charles seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Conservation Committee Report

Land Development Code rewrite

All draft elements have been completed for the county's Land Development Code rewrite. Public and stakeholder meetings are scheduled for March 23 & 24. John stated he will have specific comments to present at next week's discussion. Nancy will resend a link for the 500+ page draft document.

Conservation Division Manager's Report

Pinewood Lake Park

Quinton reported several trees at Pinewood Lake Park have dead limbs; it will be necessary to obtain quotes to handle the trimming. Traffic through the park has become a problem, damaging the property, creating an impromptu road, and allowing for illegal activities at the back of the park. Quinton will get quotes for blocking access with fencing and/or bollards.

Mill Creek

The bridge at the Upper Mill Creek property was damaged in the February storms; it was lifted off of its support structure and logs became wedged underneath the bridge. The county's Roads and Drainage Division at Public Works is not able to make the repairs. Gail, who is a bridge engineer, will meet Quinton on site and make recommendations. The condition of the foundation will be critical information as to how to proceed with repair or replacement.

The Mill Creek/Cabin Branch properties all require maintenance on the roads and open fields. In 2019, Quinton notified Clayton he would like to proceed with hiring one contractor to provide maintenance at both properties since the Transportation Department wanted all the projects put together. Clayton responded that Administration did not want to proceed with them all together. Earlier today, Quinton spoke with the Transportation Department and they still want a combined contract so Quinton will re-initiate the process to hire one contractor for all of the work, which would likely be less expensive than individual contractors for smaller jobs.

Walden Pond

Quinton reported the cost of expanding the scope of work for WK Dickson to provide the survey work for the feasibility study at Walden Pond is \$17,500. He will deal with Procurement and Administration to get the contract amended.

Columbia Rowing Club

Clayton requested significant information on the historical background of operating agreements between the club and the county. County Council & committee meeting minutes were searched going back to 1999. The information was provided on March 9 and no response has been received. The agreement expires April 7 and the club is concerned about its status should it not be approved by then. Since two docks have been washed away in past years, a walk-in dock approach is being considered.

Fairfield Waste Water Treatment Plant

Tim explained there is nothing new to report concerning the proposed wastewater treatment plant in Fairfield County. Consultants at a Fairfield County Council meeting were able to provide better information about the impact to wells and aquifer.

Legal Contract Status

Procurement will re-issue the RFQ with minor modifications, a broader scope, and more conservation-oriented language.

Charles made a motion seconded by Tim to extend the meeting an additional 10 minutes. Motion carried.

Conservation Coordinator’s Report

Plastic Bag Ordinance

Nancy is now chairing the county task force which continues to meet weekly. At this point over 5,500 responses to the survey have been received from residents and businesses. The coronavirus pandemic will impact further outreach. Committee members have been working shifts at libraries which are now closed as is the Soda City Farmers Market which was to be targeted for surveys. The task force is open to suggestions on how to obtain more responses. Councilwoman Allison Terracio suggested working with organizations that use on-line digital organizing techniques to reach a broader audience. Nancy will contact Ms. Terracio for more help in this arena. Stakeholder and community meetings have been scheduled but are now on hold. Cards were passed around with the QR Code and website for taking the survey. Nancy organized a litter pick-up on Saturday March 14 to help publicize the plastic bag ordinance and survey. The county partnered with Gills Creek Watershed Association and about 25 people picked up 34 bags of trash and 5 tires. Ms. Terracio participated and was interviewed by WACH 57.

Greenway

The Transportation Department held an informational meeting last week to explain Council-approved greenway realignments. Councilmembers Terracio and Jackson were present. Ms. Terracio commented to RCCC she wanted the Greenway Advisory Committee to be re-convened and was pleased when Carol told her it had been.

MacGregor Property

Nancy reported she has had no success in finding the feasibility study done for the 71-acre tract of land donated to the county by a separate LLC of the Mungo Company in 2007. She was able to track down the engineer responsible for the study but his company has changed twice since then and they couldn’t access it; neither can Administration locate the report. Quinton will inform Administration of the former owner’s contention the land should revert back to them since it is not being used as a golf course. As mentioned last month, the land is being maintained according to the restrictions in the deed – “... or a natural green space for passive, non-consumptive, recreational uses.”

Nancy has requested permission for a historic marker for the Columbia Hospital Negro Unit and Negro Nurses to be installed on county property. This marker was not funded by RCCC but requires approval from Council to install it across from the Administration Building overlooking the location of the old hospital.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Fisher

Addendum: Jim Thomas told his Councilmember Chip Jackson he needed to resign from RCCC for health reasons. Mr. Jackson requested he take a 90 day leave rather than resign and let him know of his decision at that point.