



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

**Minutes
 December 21, 2020**

Attendance

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

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Charlie Fisher	Conservation Division
Brian Crooks	Planning Services Division
Tommy DeLage	Planning Services Division
Meghan Sullivan	Planning Services Division

Call to Order

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

Buddy made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by John. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Gail moved to approve the minutes of November 16, 2020 and was seconded by John following the correction of a grammatical error. Motion carried.

Report of the Chair

Carol discussed the need for everyone to be present at our January 11, 2021 meeting because elections will be held for RCCC officers. Carol stated she would be stepping down as chair but would remain on the RCCC until such time a replacement has been appointed by incoming District 8 Council member Overture Walker.

Treasurer’s Report

Robert Squirewell reported on the budget and noted a change of about \$10k from the November budget.

Report of the Community Planning & Development Director

Quinton presented Clayton’s report due to Clayton’s absence. Concerning refilling Nancy’s position (Conservation Program Analyst), Clayton referred us to Assistant County Administrator Ashley Powell’s email of November 11. Carol reviewed her letter to Ashley dated December 15 asking for a reconsideration of the decision by Clayton not to fill this position at this time. (refer to the November 2020 RCCC minutes). Carol reviewed Ashley’s letter which outlined her support of Clayton’s authority not to fill the position and that no standard criteria exists to evaluate the need to rehire. Carol raised the question of when the position will be refilled and her concern over having only one remaining staff member (Quinton). Quinton will discuss the proposed staffing arrangement utilizing Meghan to assist on the RCCC’s grant programs under Quinton’s report.

The CDBG Mitigation Plan, specifically the grant compliance and financial components, have been approved by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grant agreement was forwarded to Richland County on December 16. Staff will receive HUD technical assistance regarding grant reporting starting in January 2021.

Meghan (Planning Services Division) has completed a Community Engagement Proposal regarding the Timberlane Tree Planting Plan along the proposed Gills Creek Greenway. The plan is currently under review by Clayton. Brian introduced Meghan and stated the proposal would focus on reengaging residents in the Gills Creek area. Carol emphasized the Gills Creek community has been and is actively involved in the greenway, and staff should be aware of the prior community positions. Meghan will be responsible for the engagement process.

Conservation Committee Report

John stated the Committee had completed its comments on the Land Development Code (LDC) and would be submitting those to Planning Services next week. He reemphasized issues concerning wetlands protection and the need to better address the various overlay districts. The Agricultural District should provide for improved farmland protection and the Conservation District should more broadly consider water resources and floodplain issues. John suggested protection of these environmental areas could be achieved through easements and purchase of development rights. Tommy stated the difficulty of receiving public input due to the pandemic and hoped in the next couple of months to have a final draft with an April to May 2021 approval time. John asked how best to proceed on approval of the comments by the full RCCC. A decision was made to ask Quinton to email the comments to all Commissioners and request their written approval. The comments will be sent under John’s signature as Committee chair. Quinton thanked Tommy for all his help with the LDC.

Conservation Manager’s Report

2021-22 Grants

Quinton recommended the RCCC proceed with public notice and solicitation of applications for both conservation and historic preservation grants. Quinton reviewed the operational procedures for grant management in the coming year. Based on Nancy’s prior grants work, the minimum amount of time of (FTE) dedicated to grants ranges from 3% up to a maximum of 83% during various periods. The busiest times are the grant review during February and grant close-out during May-July. Buddy emphasized Quinton will need to invest a considerable amount of his time to grant management during the peak months since Meghan can only contribute a maximum of 50% of her time. Meghan has spoken with Quinton about her role during the peak

periods. Carol expressed her concern over the work load ahead especially due to the pandemic restrictions on meeting. She further requested a disclaimer be included in the public notice addressing RCCC staff limitations. John confirmed how much hands on involvement is needed from RCCC staff to ensure the submittal of quality grants. Buddy suggested the need for grant applicants to submit well-written “clean” grants. Robert inquired whether we could extend the grant period. Carol explained the process cannot be extended due to the rigid time frame to accept, review and approve grants within Council’s required budget timeframe. John moved to initiate the grant cycle and stressed the importance of grant compliance and that a statement be included on the RCCC’s staff constraints. Tim seconded and the motion passed.

Lake Elizabeth

John discussed the letter answering Lake Elizabeth homeowners’ concerns about public access around the lake. Quinton meet with the HOA explaining the letter. John moved to approve sending the letter to RC Administration for approval and ultimate transmittal to the HOA. Tim seconded and the motion passed.

Cabin Branch Property

Quinton reviewed the written response from John McAllister on behalf of Horrell Hill LLC regarding the 60 acre property (Parcel R24600-01-33). The requested sale price is \$374,937.50 and this offered price expires on February 1, 2021. Tim stated this price is high and we need to consider the nature of the property and its difficulty to develop. Buddy explained the requested price may have been based on an incorrect sale price for an adjacent parcel. He also emphasized the difficulty to develop the property due to the significant wetlands and flood prone areas as well as the apparent lack of any clear ingress or egress to the developable eastern portion of the parcel.

Buddy moved to table this item until the January 2021 meeting and requested Quinton confirm the sale price of the adjacent RCCC-owned parcels, determine the percentage of wetlands and flood-prone areas on the parcel and attempt to determine any exiting access easements to the parcel. Robert seconded the motion which passed. John mentioned this demonstrates the need for having a specialized contract attorney to assist in these matters. Carol referenced the lack of legal assistance from Richland County due to recent resignations in the County attorney’s office.

2021 Meeting Dates

Quinton provided the proposed meeting dates for 2021. Buddy moved to approve and Tim seconded. The motion passed.

Waterways Symposium

John explained the upcoming symposium on January 7-8 and requested a \$500 sponsorship from the RCCC to support the effort. This will be a virtual conference and registration is free. Buddy moved to support a \$500 sponsorship for the conference and Gail seconded. The motion passed.

New Business

Commissioner Appointments

Quinton mentioned the need to fill the three vacant commissioner positions and requested for Commissioners to inform him or Carol of potential candidates. Carol suggested we develop separate letters for each of the new and existing County Council members regarding their appointments on the RCCC. Tim mentioned he and Kenny Mullis (Chair RSWCD) had met with Councilman-elect Derrek Pugh (District 2) and provided him information

on the RCCC and RSWCD. Tim hopes to be reappointed. Robert has communicated with Councilwoman-elect Gretchen Barron (District 7) and also hopes to be reappointed. Carol spoke with Councilman-elect Overture Walker (District 8) and informed him of the RCCC programs and the need to replace her since she will be retiring from the RCCC. Councilwoman-elect Jesica Mackey (District 9) needs to be contacted since the District 9 RCCC position is vacant. Councilwoman Rev. English (District 10) also needs to appoint a Commissioner. Buddy mentioned he and former District 2 RCCC Commissioner Lee Rambo had met with her via Zoom and provided information on both RCCC and RSWCD programs. Based on the conversation, Buddy believes she will be supportive of our efforts in District 10 and in particular future implementation of the Lower Richland Tourism Plan. Carol asked Quinton to talk with Sam Holland regarding his conversations with Councilwoman McBride. Lastly, the District 4 commissioner position is vacant and Chairman Livingston needs to be contacted regarding his new appointment.

Administrative Assistance

With Charlie Fisher's retirement, Gail brought up the need to have some administrative support from CP&D to assist the Division including the preparation of minutes. Gail stated we were promised help and John agreed. Quinton mentioned he would talk with Clayton about administrative assistance and inquire how to seek assistance from CP&D administrative services. Carol commended Charlie's 15 years of assistance and service to the RCCC.

Carol reminded everyone of our next meeting on January 11, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
James Blake Atkins, Ph.D.