



2020 Hampton Street · Room 3063A Columbia, SC 29204
(803) 576-2083
Minutes
April 17, 2023
4th Floor Conference Room

Attendance

Commissioner	District	Present
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	Yes
Wayman Stover	3	Yes
Glenice Pearson	4	No
Kip Dillihay	5	Yes
John Grego	6	Yes
Robert Squirewell	7	No
Deborah DePaoli	8	Yes
Khali Gallman	9	Yes
Darrell Jackson Jr.	10	No
Gail Rodriguez	11	Yes

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Val Morris	Conservation Division
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Aric Jensen	Assistant County Administrator
Stacie Richey	Guest

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:33pm. Members, staff, and guests met in-person or by Zoom.

Approval of Agenda

- ⇒ **Weber moved to approve the agenda which was seconded by Stover. Motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Minutes

- ⇒ **Weber moved to approve February minutes which was seconded by Rodriguez. Motion passed unanimously.**
- ⇒ **Weber moved to approve March minutes which was seconded by DePaoli. Motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan (LRTP) – update:** Grego reported the recommendations from the Planning Commission to adopt LRTP as an amendment to Richland County’s Comprehensive Master Plan was approved by County Council.
- **Land Development Code (LDC) – update:** Grego met with Jensen to review the Planning Commission recommendations and amendments, where he compared them in the letter he prepared that was sent to County Council. Grego stated by looking at the Planning Commission amendments, one thing has evolved, the increased density for agricultural parcels and homestead parcels. The change seemed to be based on community input, citing the community wants lower densities as recommended. They also discussed cluster development, stating in past experiences, developers have used this as a tool to develop parcels in rural areas which otherwise may have not been developed.
- **Annual Work Plan – update:** Grego reported he presented the Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) Annual Work Plan to County Council on Tuesday, March 21, 2023. He thought the presentation went well with very few questions from Council.
- **Advocacy – discussion:** Stover reported he attended an informational planning and zoning meeting and Councilwoman McBride was also in attendance. They had a brief informal conversation about being more educated about the planning and zoning process. Weber reported he plans to meet with his councilman to discuss the grants the Natural Resource Committee (NRC) approved for FY23-24 and to answer any questions.
- **Letter of recommendation for the Congaree Biosphere Region’s grant application – action item:** Grego reported he circulated a copy of a support letter prepared by Epps with a template supplied by Jeremy Dertien, of Clemson University. The support letter is to assist Dertien with obtaining a grant for the US Biosphere Network and the Congaree Biosphere Region to study climate resiliency. Grego noted the deadline for the grant application is April 20, 2023.
 - ⇒ **DePaoli moved to approve the endorsement letter for Jeremy Dertien, which was seconded by Weber. Motion passed unanimously.**
- **Climate Action Plan – discussion:** Grego reported there was a discussion during a Natural Resources Committee (NRC) meeting to begin research on developing a Climate Action Plan. Epps has started researching other South Carolina counties for climate resiliency plans, which show things the government could do, county initiatives, and comparisons to the things the Commission is doing in the Land and Development Code. Weber stated he will move this item to the NCR portion of the agenda.

Report from Community Planning and Development

- **Land Development Code-Remapping Restart – update:** Jensen reported the Land Development Code has come out of the Planning Commission. Jason Branham, Planning Commission Chair, made a report to council, the council chair recommended the item be sent to Development & Services Committee, (D&S) for review and recommendations to Council.

- **Treasurer’s Report – update:** Epps reported there were no significant changes in the budget however, there were about \$5,000 in new purchase orders in the Automotive – Non-Contract Services for repairs on vehicles, tractors and one for fencing at Pinewood Lake Park. Lastly, twenty five percent of the grant funding has been paid out this year.

Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) Report

- **Heritage Tourism Marketing Plan – update:** McKenzie reported Historic Columbia has begun putting together a full database of all African-American heritage sites and other historic resources. Destination Analysts has begun analyzing data to create marketing ideas to bring in additional revenue. A representative from Experience Columbia went to New York to conduct desk side appointments with 28 journalists, freelancers and content creators, they completed a visitor’s survey and are in the beginning stages of collaborating with Charleston Visitors Bureau, Explore Charleston and other organizations.
- **Randolph Cemetery-Presentation:** Stacie Richey, with the Committee for the Beautification and Restoration of Randolph Cemetery (CBRRC) gave the Committee a brief overview of the Randolph Cemetery and the Thompson Cottage. She explained the history of the cemetery and the requirements for burial. She mentioned the costs to maintain and repair the property. The CBRRC accepted the donation of the Thompson Cottage with the hopes of generating revenue to assist with the upkeep of the Randolph Cemetery. This too, as she explained, has also been a strain due to the cottage needing repairs itself. In addition, Richey described funding they have received from RCCC and other organizations as well as projects they have completed so far. The CBRRC was recently awarded a \$100,000.00 grant to be used within a three-year timespan, for projects to improve the cemetery thanks to Rep. Todd Rutherford.

Natural Resources Committee (NRC) Report

- **Mill Creek Bridge – update:** Work in progress/no action taken.
- **Columbia Rowing Club – update:** Weber reported the renewal of the Operating Agreement with Columbia Rowing Club has been approved by the Natural Resources Committee (NRC) and the NRC is seeking approval from RCCC to move the Operating Agreement forward to County Council.
 - ⇒ **Weber motioned to approve the renewal of the Operating Agreement with Columbia Rowing Club, which was seconded by Stover. Motion passed unanimously.**
- **Bates Old River – update:** Work in progress/no action taken.
- **Mitigation Bank Credits – update:** Epps reported Richland County are the holders of the entire Mill Creek Mitigation Bank, citing the deal with the Scout Project allowed the economic development portion of the county to buy out the rest of the credits owned by other banking partners.

- **Forestry Stewardship Plan – update:** Work in progress/no action taken.

Conservation Program Analyst’s Report

- **FY 22-23 RCCC Grants – update:** McKenzie presented a spreadsheet showing the progress of the FY22-23 grants, showing most of the grant recipients have submitted their third quarterly reports and he was still waiting for a few others to submit their reports.
- **FY 23-24 RCCC Grants –** McKenzie issued the group a hard copy of the FY23-24 Richland County Conservation Commission Grant Recommendations which showed the name of the Organizations, Project Title, Status, FY23-Award, (if applicable), FY24 Total Project Cost, FY24 Requested Amount and FY24-Recommendations.
- **Conservation Easement – update:** McKenzie reported the completion of monitoring for all 32 of the easement properties, acknowledging Ben Jones and the Geographic Information System (GIS) department for making the monitoring process faster by using their drone in a pilot project to help with overseeing monitoring.
- **Events – update:** McKenzie reported Councilwoman Chakisse Newton of District 11 donated \$10,000 to the Modjeska Simpkins house from the FY22-23 Hospitality Tax Discretionary Funds during the April 4th Council Meeting. McKenzie also reported the Rules and Appointment Committee recently included quarterly attendance reports in their meetings. Grego added the Rules and Appointment Committee addressed attendance reports in a recent meeting, including RCCC meeting attendance. Lastly, McKenzie reported the following events:
 - **Ag + Art Tour statewide kickoff, April 18, 2023 @ USC Russell House Ballroom, Columbia, SC**
 - **Ribbon Cutting of the Eagle ADA Pathway, April 20, 2023 @ Harbison State Forest, Columbia, SC**
 - **Lower Richland Sweet Potato Festival, April 29, 2023 @ Hopkins Park, 6940 Lower Richland Blvd, Hopkins, SC**
 - **SC PTA 100th Anniversary Celebration, April 29, 2023 @ 1826 Henderson Street, Columbia, SC**

Conservation Manager’s Report

- **Annual budget submission – update:** Epps reported the Annual Budget was submitted and he has received recommendations from Administration for the FY23-24 budget. Epps stated one change for the recommended budget is causing some concerns. In the past, \$143,988.00 was allocated for the management of Pinewood Lake Park and Mill Creek & Cabin Branch properties and this dollar amount was reflected in the General Ledger. This year, Administration said there would be a zero balance on the General Ledger for Pinewood Lake Park and Mill Creek & Cabin Branch. Epps took this concern to Administration and was told the \$143,988.00 is still allocated for both properties but the dollar amount will only show up in the General Ledger on a reimbursement basis.

- **Staff vacancies – update:** Epps reported the applicant for the Land Program Planner position declined the offer. Epps stated he had begun the process of reviewing applications and scheduling interviews to hire someone else for the position.

New Business: There was discussion of a letter that was received from concerned citizens who are opposed to the development of the Ridge Road development in Hopkins, SC.

Public Input: None

⇒ **At 5:01 pm, DePaoli moved to adjourned the meeting, which was seconded by Gallman. Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Val Morris