



2020 Hampton Street · Room 3063A
 Columbia, SC 29204
 (803) 576-2083

Minutes
July 18, 2022
4th Floor Conference Room

Attendance

Commissioner	District	Present
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	No
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	Yes
Gail Rodriguez	11	Yes

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Mary Hannah Lindsay	Conservation Division
Geo Price	Community Planning and Development Department

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:34pm. Members, staff, and guests met in-person or by telephone.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

- ⇒ **Stover moved to approve the minutes of the June meeting which was seconded by DePaoli. Motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan (LRTP) – update:** Grego reported since the last Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) meeting, the LRTP was moved from the Development and Services Committee to County Council, which motioned to approve forwarding the plan to the Planning Commission to add it as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. This

passed unanimously. They approved the plan, not the budget. There was some discussion suggesting Risk Management examine the LRTP to determine the LRTP's feasibility. That suggestion was viewed as premature and would be more appropriate when the project is being prepared. Epps said he is working to get the LRTP on the Planning Commission's agenda and it should be presented by the RCCC because it is a conservation initiative. Grego responded he would be happy to do that. After the Planning Commission adopts it as part of the Comprehensive Plan, County Council would have to approve the ordinance change.

- **Land Development Code – Letter to Planning Commission – action item:** Grego announced he plans to distribute a letter to the Planning Commission on behalf of the RCCC. Stover asked Grego to review the salient points of the letter. Grego responded the letter was an opportunity to discuss issues with the Zoning Map. In drafts of the Zoning Map, they tend to not emphasize the conservation zoning districts and we don't have a feel for how widely they apply the watershed protection overlay. We encouraged applying it more widely. Throughout the ordinance, there are good protections of Richland County surface waters, but the watershed protection overlay is to protect headwaters and intermittent streams. The letter mentioned the RCCC would like to see the overlay more widely applied to protect the county's wetlands and waters.

The letter also noted we are glad to see the Homestead (HM) and Agriculture (AG) zones applied so widely, but once we start looking at the margins, there are some areas that appear to be one zone but are another. Many residents were concerned HM did not permit agricultural activities as widely as they hoped. We suggested the Planning Commission add in a few more uses as to what can be permitted on an HM property. The letter discouraged the use of the term "hobby farming" in reference to agricultural activity on HM properties. The Planning Commission passed a motion disallowing multi-family housing in certain zones, which was concerning due to affordability and how similar restrictive zoning was used in the past. Grego commented he understood zoning policy is complex, so he approached the letter with humility.

Price reiterated the main determination between HM and AG properties was personal use vs. commercial use. Price stated he wished they could change the use of the term "hobby farms," but it is what they developed into messaging around the LDC and they must adhere to it. In terms of a zoning exclusion, the Planning Commission is currently reviewing the text and future maps, agreeing on certain changes, finishing reviews, and forwarding it to County Council. The residents who have attended meetings, called, and sent in letters are not concerned about zoning exclusion. Those voices have said they do not want those uses in those zones, and the Planning Commission went along with those voices. The Planning Commission is considering changes in zoning districts based on acreage. Some oppositional voices have said the density of some zones is too low and to be able to subdivide their property, they will need more acreage.

In some rural areas, the land is their family wealth and they want to be able to divide their land as such. Many people have plans for what they want do with their properties, but these plans can take 10-15 years. We tried making decisions about what is best for the county now, not years into the future. Regarding the watershed protection overlay, Price asked if the suggestions the RCCC made in this letter would be ready to present to the Planning Commission or if we can look at it after County Council gives the final reading.

Grego held it would take a lot of studying, and there are areas that look like open space but contain conservation easements and county parks. Price responded it was deemed open space, but that term included recreational and conservation zoning designations for now. Price assured the RCCC the Planning Commission does appreciate any expertise the RCCC offers as guidance. He continued the Planning Commission has heard from many groups and organization, but we could possibly allow an opportunity for longer presentations to delve into any issues.

⇒ **DePaoli motioned to approve the letter to forward to the Planning Commission. Stover seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.**

- **Heritage Tourism Marketing Plan – update:** Grego reported the plan was presented to the Development and Services committee and most of the discussion centered around the 20% contingency. There was a motion to keep the plan in the committee stage, but the first pass was unsuccessful. Grego continued that he requested an Executive Committee meeting with Councilwoman Gretchen Barron, the RCCC County Council liaison. We had a constructive meeting with her after we summarized all of the notes and questions about the plan. The plan will be on the agenda again when the Development and Services committee next meets.

Epps added that he received a follow-up with Councilwoman Barron, in which she stated she would prefer a 15% contingency. Price explained that this suggestion was the standard contingency. On Tuesday, July 26, 2022, the Development and Services committee meets and will discuss the plan again. If they pass it, the hope is County Council will put the plan on the agenda for a special-called meeting to take place Tuesday, August 30, 2022.

Report from Community Planning and Development

- **Richland County Zoning Map – update:** Price stated the Planning Commission is still making determinations about topics and sections of the Land Development Code. Staff will then look over the maps before the public has the opportunity speak on them. Many of those with concerns will speak on behalf of their own property, not their area. DePaoli asked if there are any neighborhood associations from more rural areas to represent entire communities.

Price clarified there are usually family or community representatives to speak on behalf of their entire area. DePaoli pointed out that there are preconceived notions about multifamily homes and there is room to educate and market them to communities in which they may be unwelcomed. Price responded the concerns usually come from people living in an established area facing changes. When they bought a home in a neighborhood, they expect it to stay that way.

Dillihay inquired if considerations took infrastructure into account and where it may be lacking. Price answered no, but we do receive inquiries in zoning requests asking if we have the infrastructure to develop. Zoning is separate from the ability to develop. If we don't have the infrastructure, that just means we won't be able to develop it in a certain way. Dillihay responded he was concerned about properties with septic tanks only allowing a certain amount of development, and asked if someone can appeal their property's classification.

Price recalled some people called in about reclassification and we determined their properties were better suited to be AG and not HM. Moving forward, we will establish an ordinance for

people on a property that has been reclassified, allowing people to request a change without a major cost. Grego stated he was alarmed by how costly the current appeal process was.

- **Timberlane Drive – update:** Price stated it is more of a concept than a plan, but Gills Creek Watershed Association had a grant from the Central Carolina Community Foundation to develop the concept. There are hopes to develop properties purchased by the county through FEMA buyouts and develop them into greenspaces. Once we receive feedback from administration, we will have more information about the path moving forward.

Treasurer’s Report

- **FY23 General Budget Status:** Epps stated the FY23 budget is in place. He continued the budget keys for Pinewood Lake Park and Mill Creek had some significant errors, but he and Lindsay are working to correct them. Everything else looks to be on track for this time of year.

Historic Committee Report

- **Historic Tourism Marketing Plan--update:** Grego stated Pearson expressed an interest in the Historic Columbia Foundation (HCF) reaching out to stakeholders. Pearson wanted to schedule a meeting with (HCF) soon and within the constraints of our scope of work and our contract. Grego asked Epps for his guidance. Epps commented once the contract is awarded, we must minimize our out of scope requests. Historic Columbia will want to be paid for services requested outside of their contract, and they should be. Epps stated the timeline proposed by the selected vendor would have the marketing plan and recommendation completed in April 2023.

McKenzie added Pearson is worried about the timeline of the plan falling back while waiting for approval. She wants us to talk to people, organizations, and groups we know to help market the plan. The county and Historic Columbia are making steps to help market the plan, which has been released by the Richland County Public Information Office (PIO). She was worried if we were able to start publicizing the plan, which we are.

Gallman said the press release was written well, and asked where it was sent and if it received media coverage. Epps responded there was some coverage, and PIO released it to their media lists. Gallman recalled her own experience in public information and the media is finicky about what they will post. We should utilize the media to help us do outreach. Epps expressed he would research PIO’s media contact list.

Natural Resource Committee Report

- **Mitigation credits potential purchase – update:** Epps announced a check was received for mitigation credits. To date, the RCCC is approaching \$3 million in credit sales. Grego added that in the Executive Committee meeting, Weber suggested to note on RCCC meeting agendas that ongoing projects with no updates are still “works in progress/no action needed.”
- **Lake Elizabeth donation acceptance – works in progress/no action needed**
- **Columbia Rowing Club --- works in progress/no action needed**

- **Land purchase grant – works in progress/no action needed**

Conservation Program Analyst's Report

- **FY2021-2022 RCCC Grants** – McKenzie stated all of the FY22 grants were completed excluding Benedict College. They failed to turn in the correct paperwork. Jackson asked if the RCCC contacted anyone at Benedict. McKenzie said yes, but they discontinued the line of communication. Before the completion of the FY22 grant, they also received an FY23 grant.

Epps contributed that Benedict received many reminders, but we did not receive the required materials. There is very little we can do regarding extensions with a one-year grant cycle. This is not Benedict's first RCCC grant. We have only extended grants through County Council because of COVID-19 interruptions. Gallman asked if we can delay the FY23 grant until Benedict completes the FY22 grant. She added that she has some contacts at Benedict that may be of assistance.

Epps responded the funding is no longer available for them with which to complete the project. Epps added, historically, they have done good and timely projects, but fell short this year. Stover asked why they fell short. Epps responded they did not submit the appropriate reimbursement requests. McKenzie added their projects also involve grants from the National Park Service (NPS).

When they received the FY22 grant, the entire project needed blanket approval from the NPS, which set them back. Grego confirmed working with the NPS can be a slow process. Though their quarterly reports were on track, they did not have quotes for their project. They needed three quotes on the project, but we accepted one to get them over the finish line. They still were unsuccessful.

- **FY2022-2023 RCCC Grants** – McKenzie scheduled a meeting with the FY23 grant recipients to cover expectations to take place on Wednesday, July 20, 2022.
- **Fabel Conservation Easement – update:** McKenzie reported the easement was on track. There are ongoing negotiations to separate ten of the acres towards the front of the property where the structures are and to preserve the remaining 90 acres or so.

Conservation Manager's Report

- **Staff vacancies – update:** Epps mentioned the efforts to replace the Land Program Planner are ongoing. He added Mary Hannah Lindsay will be vacating the Administrative Assistant position as she has accepted another role. Lindsay felt gratitude for the last four years in the Conservation Division and will continue to serve South Carolina in a statewide non-profit. Epps will now begin the process for filling this role, as well.

- **Mill Creek Bridge design – update:** Epps stated there was no progress to report. We are still waiting on clearance from the Army Corps of Engineers. We are hoping the price will decrease to the original quote while we wait. Weber asked Epps if the engineers believed the prices would decrease. Epps responded a mild recession could drive demand down and reduce prices. Weber voiced concern the prices would not decrease for 6-7 years and the project would not reach a timely completion. Epps replied the RCCC should decide if the project should move forward sooner rather than later.
- **Online Attendance Reporting – discussion:** McKenzie explained we received a directive to take and submit attendance for the RCCC meetings. In addition to attendance, we must provide a reason why commissioners were absent. Examples of reasons included “sick, vacation, and not available”. “Not available” is being recorded when no reason is provided. Price added this directive came from the Rules and Appointments Committee to track meeting attendance when they reappoint commissioners or commissioners apply to serve on different commissions.

New Business

- **Farmers Market – discussion:** Grego remarked the state secured \$9 million for the Convention Center. Instead, this was divided into three pieces. \$4 million was designated towards a Farmers Market near Bluff Road. Grego wanted it on everyone’s radar because it has the same goals as the Lower Richland Tourism Plan. Jackson added he is working closely with the Farmers Market project. It is in the first phase of many.

The land once belonged to his church, but a project developer bought it from them and has connected the Farmers Market to the city of Columbia. The proposal is to have a market, a food truck station, and farm-to-table commercial kitchens. The neighborhood is a food desert so it would be a good resource for the community. Right now, the project is heavily tied to the city, but Jackson would like to see Richland County involved.

- **Hettie Anderson Historical Marker** – Grego explained Dillihay was approached by Karen Strickland of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission. They are interested in a historical marker celebrating Henrietta Dickerson (Hettie Anderson), who was an artist model at the turn of the century. She comes from a free family of color in Columbia, South Carolina. She modeled for the \$20 Saint Gaudens Gold Piece coin, which is considered to be one of America’s most beautiful coins. She also modeled for a statue in Central Park in New York City. Dillihay added she and her family are buried in unmarked graves in the Elmwood Cemetery. There is very significant history there – we should recognize her.

⇒ **At 5:05pm, Grego moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Stover. Motion passed unanimously.**