



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

Minutes January 28, 2019

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Charles Weber, Andrea Williams, Sam Holland, Margaret DuBard, Jim Thomas, Tim McSwain, and Robert Squirewell

Absent: Virginia Sanders, Glenice Pearson

Vacant: District 5

Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division

Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Division

Charlie Fisher, Conservation Division

Ken Driggers, Legal Counsel

Meghan Sullivan, Community Planning & Development (CP&D) Department

Dr. Duarte Morais, NC State University, People First Tourism

Aby Sene-Harper, Clemson University

Stanley Green, Clemson University

Buddy Atkins, Richland County resident

John Newman, Consultant

Allison Terracio, County Councilmember

Report of the Chair

Chair Carol Kososki welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30pm with a quorum. The new RCCC Commissioners, Tim McSwain and Andrea Williams took a moment to introduce themselves and talk briefly about their interests. Carol passed around several newspaper clippings including the departure of County Interim Administrator, Edward Gomeau, effective February 23. County Council continues to search for a permanent Administrator. Mr. Gomeau wrote Carol a letter requesting RCCC find a way to forge a close operating relationship with Lakita Watson, the new Executive Director of the Richland County Recreation Commission. Quinton explained he, Nancy, and Capital Project Manager, Mike Niermeier have already had a productive meeting with Ms. Watson about our similar goals of providing nature-based recreation.

Approval of Agenda

John Grego made a motion to approve the agenda and the minutes of November 19, 2018 which was seconded by Jim Thomas. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Nancy referred everyone to their financial reports and said very little has changed since the last meeting.

Gateway Communities Conference Report

Nancy reported she and Andrea Williams had a great trip to historic Shepherdstown WV where the conference was held at the National Conservation Training Center. Gateway communities are close to public lands such as parks, forests, monuments, and historic sites. Two key points were the need for community buy-in and while recreational resources bring tourism revenues, their greatest value is in enhancing the quality of life of the residents. In 2017 Congaree National Park had 159,595 visitors with a total visitor spending impact of \$7,827,500 within a 60-mile radius. The purpose of the Lower Richland Tourism Plan is to create reasons and opportunities for a much greater percentage of visitor spending to remain in Lower Richland communities. Needs include: shared values and vision; recognition of parks as community assets; infrastructure improvements; and collaboration. Andrea was impressed with how different states have grown and supported gateway communities, the resources available, and the networking that occurred. She is particularly interested in promoting the dark skies quality in Lower Richland. A meeting is being planned with the Superintendent of Congaree National Park, K. Lynn Berry to discuss the Lower Richland Tourism Plan and community engagement activities. Best Practices in Gateway communities was included in the meeting packet.

People First Tourism

To figure out how to get the Lower Richland community engaged in an economic way, Quinton invited Dr. Duarte Morais, a professor at NC State, to talk about his People First Tourism initiative. He was accompanied by Aby Sene-Harper who is doing post-doctoral work at Clemson on managing conservation and recreation. They spent several hours touring Lower Richland today. Dr. Morais's presentation was titled "Leveraging Tourism Microentrepreneurship for Endogenous Conservation."

Dr. Morais explained that destination marketing has not produced the equitable prosperity and sustainability so often promised. He described the People First Tourism as a marketplace for buying and selling genuine tourism experiences in underserved areas. The focus is on micro entrepreneurship through training, research, and commercialization. Local people decide what and how stories should be shared, their version of history, and clarify injustices. People First Tourism links entrepreneurs trying to pursue a sustainable livelihood with adventurous and conscientious tourists interested in unique, unscripted, off-the-beaten-path experiences in the communities they visit. Some of their projects have been virtual reality tours of farms, front porch talks, RV parking at farms (www.harvesthosts.com), day trips, videos about chefs and farmers, and customized tours packaged with hotels and restaurants. Tourism Destination organizations are hungry for these signature experiences. NC State and Clemson have an advantage in developing these programs since so much of the work is extension work.

The website www.peoplefirsttourism.com states "Host communities need their leaders and civic organizations to understand economic forces of tourism and to strive to make tourism serve the interests of their constituents. Civic and democratic processes of community involvement in tourism planning and ownership will ensure that tourism generates long-term culturally appropriate livelihood opportunities to diverse social groups."

Dr. Morais confirmed the tourism concept is very compatible with the LR Richland Tourism Plan. When asked about funding, he replied that seed funding will be needed to get started for the first two to three years and then grants will be sought.

New Councilwoman Allison Terracio arrived during the presentation and was introduced.

Community Planning & Development Director's Report

Meghan Sullivan reported Ashley Powell was unable to attend but would provide an update of the Land Development Manual at the next RCCC meeting.

Conservation Manager's Report

Pinewood Lake Park

Quinton met with Councilman Chip Jackson and newly elected Councilwoman Chakisse Newton at the park for 2 ½ hours earlier in January. The informational meeting went well and many questions were answered regarding the park's operation. Interim Administrator Gomeau met with Carol and Quinton and plans to advise Council on the disposition of Pinewood Lake Park Foundation claimed items on county property.

Walden Pond

There has been no change since the November report. The consultants are waiting until the Penny Project gets to the 60% design stage for improvements of Spears Creek Church Road.

Conservation Coordinator's Report

Updates

Margaret DuBard reported a new historical society was recently formed in Richland County. The Cedar Creek Historical Association was founded by her husband Bill DuBard to preserve Cedar Creek Methodist Church, the oldest Methodist church in the county, established in 1743. The first goal of the organization is to procure the decommissioned church from the Methodist Conference. Their mission includes preserving other buildings, documents, and sites and items of historical interest in the community.

Nancy asked all RCCC members to sign the annual Basic Roles and Responsibilities of the RCCC agreement and return it to her.

Nancy reminded members about the grand opening of the Smithsonian exhibit "Crossroads: Change in Rural America" hosted by SERCO on February 9. The deadline for grant submissions is February 4. This cycle of grants used an on-line process through Zoom Grants. Committee Chairs are asked to schedule a meeting to develop 2019 implementation plans for the strategic plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant