



**Richland Soil and Water Conservation District**

**2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A**

**Columbia, SC 29204**

**(803) 576-2080 - Fax (803) 576-2088**

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July 12, 2021 • 6pm

Lizard's Thicket, 402 Beltline Blvd., Columbia, SC

### **Commissioners Present**

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Mary Burts

### **Associate Commissioners Present**

Mary Frances Hendrix

Tim McSwain

Charles Weber

### **Others Present**

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager

Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator

Mary Hannah Lindsay, Community Outreach Coordinator

Brooke Myres, SC Department of Natural Resources

### **Welcome and Call to Order**

Mullis called the meeting to order at 6pm. Laney gave the invocation.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Rhodes made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Laney and was unanimously approved.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Rhodes made a motion to approve the June 14, 2021 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.

### **Reports**

- **Financial Report:** Rhodes reported there were no deposits in the past month, and there were approximately \$4,500 in debits. The ending bank balance was \$48,683.15. The bank statement was balanced with QuickBooks as of June 30, 2021. The mitigation account's ending balance May 30 was \$56,154.36.
- **Affiliate Membership Report:** Laney reported no new affiliate members or renewals since the last RSWCD meeting. RSWCD currently has 24 Friends of RSWCD.

- **Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report:** Reese was unable to attend but has emailed a folder of garden photos to Cooper. Cooper and Lindsay will find some way to use these photos to promote the garden. Reese emailed a report during the meeting which was read by Lindsay: *I met with other Lower Richland residents at a community meeting yesterday, and three (3) important issues arose.*
  1. *I announced the re-opening of Pinewood Lakes Park and the Pollinators Garden, and several residents suggested that we plan an upcoming community meeting at the pollinators garden, so more people could experience the garden and to learn more about the effects of climate change, pollution, and sprawling residential development, on pollination, and the ecology, in the Lower Richland community.*
  2. *The Lower Richland Tourism plan was discussed AGAIN, and there is widespread support to finalize the tourism plan and to request financial support for some of the proposed projects.*
  3. *Conservation Commissioner, Gail Rodriguez, was a featured guest speaker at the Community meeting, along with Dr. David Shelley, lead ranger at the Congaree Swamp. The guest speakers were encouraged to help work more collaboratively with local citizens to address pressing issues that residents believe are critically important.*
- **NRCS Report:** No written report was provided.
- **SCDNR Report:** Myres reported the winning team from the 2021 SC Envirothon (Spartanburg) will compete in the virtual international Envirothon event later this month. The SC Association of Conservation Districts' business meeting will be held September 14, 2021 at the State Farmer's Market. SC Conservation District Employees Association training will be held in Beaufort September 20-21. The Conservation Partnership Conference will be held in Charleston in February 21-23, 2022. The Peterson Brothers will be the conference keynote speakers.
- **Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC):** Richland County budget issues have dominated RCCC's recent activities. RCCC is considering easement amendments, new proposed easements, and property purchases. RCCC is also developing comments on the land development code; the comment period has been extended because the community has requested more public input. Pinewood Lake Park reopened on July 1, based on the Administrator's recommendation. There is growing community interest in the Lower Richland Tourism Plan (LRTP). In the absence of Council approval of the LRTP, Brian Crooks (Interim Planning Director) is working with Epps to have the Planning Commission approve the LRTP as an amendment to the Lower Richland Comprehensive Plan. RCCC will develop an Annual Plan to submit to Council in compliance with its enabling Ordinance. RCCC will probably also develop an Advocacy Plan. RCCC continues to work on the bridge replacement project at Mill Creek. RCCC's Annual Plan will likely include plans to spend down the Reserve Fund.
- **Education:** Cooper and Lindsay summarized the contents of a written report (Appendix A).

### **New Business**

- **Memorandum of Understanding:** Myres explained the SC Department of Natural Resources, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the SC Association of Conservation Districts began developing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to replace the 1996 agreement in 2019. The MOU and associated unfunded cooperative agreement confer no legal obligation; their purpose is to clarify each partner's role in the conservation partnership, especially as relates to the Local Work Group meeting process. Following discussion, Rhodes made a motion to approve signature of the MOU and unfunded cooperative agreement. The motion was seconded by Laney and was unanimously approved.

- **FY22 Commissioner Advocacy Plan:** Cooper reviewed the draft Advocacy Plan participants developed during the Advocacy Planning session earlier in the afternoon (Appendix B). Commissioners agreed to add an Advocacy Report to each SWCD meeting agenda for accountability. RSWCD has a Commissioner or Associate Commissioner in 8 of the 11 Council Districts. (McBride, Livingston, and English do not have a Commissioner or Associate Commissioner living in their Districts.) Cooper recommended each Commissioner and Associate Commissioner share a copy of RSWCD's article in *The Resource* with their Council member before the next RSWCD meeting in September.
- **FY22 RSWCD Budget:** Cooper reviewed the draft FY22 budget explained during the Budget Work Session earlier in the afternoon. Laney recommended targeting companies more than individuals for Friends of RSWCD fundraising in the coming year. Following discussion, Rhodes moved to adopt the FY22 budget as amended during the Work Session. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.
- **History of RSWCD Project:** Mullis has asked Gary Ward to assist with a project to document the history of the RSWCD through interviews with previous employees, including Jim Wilson, and other partners including former County Council members. A budget of \$1,000 was approved for this effort in the preceding FY22 budget motion. Laney is a former Junior Commissioner and winner of an RSWCD oratorical award. Hendrix's daughter was a recipient of an RSWCD scholarship and camp participant.
- **FY22 Plan of Work:** Following discussion, Rhodes moved to approve the FY22 Plan of Work as amended during the Work Session. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.

**Commissioner/Associate Commissioner Input:** Mullis requested data showing how participation in the Richland County Ag & Art Tour compared to other counties and to prior years.

**Public Input:** NA

**Next Meeting:** RSWCD will not meet in August. The next meeting will be held on Monday, September 13, 2021 @ 6pm @ location TBA.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst

## **Appendix A: Education Report**

### RSWCD Education Report July 12, 2021

#### **For Farmers/Natural Resource Professionals**

- Staff began planning the August Midlands Local Food Collaborative meeting and provided support for the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition's June board meeting.

#### **For Teachers/Educators**

- The District nominated partner Jane Hiller of Sonoco Recycling for the 2020 SC Environmental Awareness Award and was pleased to celebrate the award with her in a ceremony featuring Governor Henry McMaster and SC DNR Director Robert Boyles at the SC State House.
- Staff provided support for the Environmental Education Association of SC's quarterly board meeting and the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification Program's quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting.
- Four Conservation Education Mini-Grant recipients were granted extensions on project work due to delays caused by COVID.

#### **For Youth/Students**

- Staff began planning the FY22 poster contest and class presentation menu.

#### **Community Outreach**

- Richland District's education programs were featured in the spring issue of *The Resource*, a publication of the National Association of Conservation Districts.
- District staff led an upcycling activity in partnership with Keep the Midlands Beautiful and the Green Steps School program at the Columbia Homeschool Expo on June 26.
- Staff submitted final reports for the pollinator demonstration garden Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant. This grant provided \$29,287.00 for garden development and outreach over the course of FY20 and FY21. Eighteen educational videos were produced as a part of the project and have been viewed 17,155 times. The grant also supported two webinars targeting home gardeners and teachers/educators, the publication of a pollinator lesson plan for grades 1-6, the development of a plant guide and plant graphics, and several highlights on social media and in the e-newsletter.
- 16 volunteers are assisting with the Seed Sanctuary; the next shipment is expected to go out by the end of July. There are approximately 300 people on the waitlist for seeds. Lindsay is planning an in-person volunteer event later this month.
- July e-newsletter distributed to >3,000 subscribers.

## **Appendix B: FY22 RSWCD Commissioner Advocacy Plan**

### **Goal:**

- Ensure Council members, administration, and supporters understand the work of RSWCD

### **Strategies:**

- Commissioners will develop and maintain personal relationships with Council members
  - Commissioners will attend and speak at Council meetings
  - Commissioners will contact their Council representatives at least twice each year
  - Commissioners will sign up for one-on-one Council meetings when offered
  - Highlight information Commissioners can share with Council members
- Create opportunities to invite Council members to RSWCD events, including class presentations, annual banquet (if/when held), holiday drop-in, and RSWCD meetings
  - During these events, create opportunities for Council members to be on the agenda and to coordinate PIO/media coverage
- Continue to work with PIO to highlight RSWCD's work
  - This may include creating a display of RSWCD work at 2020 Hampton Street
- Continue to use the RSWCD's e-newsletter and social media to raise awareness about RSWCD programs and to highlight Council members' connections to the RSWCD
  - Highlight events which affect specific Council districts
  - Spotlight individuals who have been positively impacted by RSWCD programs
  - Include RSWCD's mission and other "about the RSWCD" tidbits in the e-newsletter
  - Commissioners will forward these e-newsletters to their Council representatives
- Consider opportunities to share information about RSWCD programs with Council via postcards (e.g. developing a standard postcard for teachers and/or students to send to Council members following an RSWCD class presentation)
- Commissioners will develop relationships with other legislators, including state representatives
- Commissioners will communicate with Administrator Brown
- Communicate with the new Community Planning and Development Department Director (when hired)
- Ensure RCCC and RSWCD have input into annual County budget proposals

### **Implementation and Accountability:**

- Each Commissioner and Associate Commissioner shall consider the Council member in whose district they reside as their primary assignment
- An Advocacy Report will be included in future RSWCD meeting agendas; during this time, commissioners will review the FY22 RSWCD Commissioner Advocacy Plan and report on progress