



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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August 10, 2020
Virtual Meeting/6:00pm

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair
Jeff Laney, Vice Chair
Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer
Hemphill Pride, III
Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners

Tim McSwain
Charles Weber
James Kilgo
Mary Hendrix

Others Present

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager
Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator
Mary Hannah Lindsay, RSWCD Education Program Assistant
Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant
Anne Marie Johnson, Pollinator Garden Manager
Reginald Hall, NRCS
Jim Manning, Richland County Council

Welcome and Call to Order

Ms. Cooper provided a Zoom meeting orientation and introduced participants. Chairman Mullis called the meeting to order and gave the invocation.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Burts made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rhodes. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Burts made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 8 Board Meeting. Commissioner Pride seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Financial Report

Deposits totaled \$2,700; checks and debits totaled \$4,618.88; ending balance is \$50,962.98 as of July 31. The bank statement is balanced with the checkbook. The Charles Schwab mitigation bank mutual fund balance is \$52,940.47 as of June 30.

Affiliate Membership

Ms. Fisher reported no new Affiliate Members have joined since May. Ms. Cooper suggested enhancement of the Affiliate Membership program should be considered at a future strategic planning session since this would increase our ability to fund conservation mini grants.

Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report

Ms. Johnson reported the bees and butterfly have been enjoying the bounty of the flowers, nectar, and pollen. Two bee habitat beds have been installed with native grasses, bee boxes, and nesting blocks. June and July saw a diversity of pollinators. Draft language has been provided for signage in the garden. Current challenges are summer storms, foliar disease, voles and rabbits with lots of watering and weeding being required. Plans are underway to prepare the vegetable beds for the fall crops and the purchase of tools. The PIO department has been instrumental in assisting with outreach.

Conservation Manager's Report/Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) Update

Mr. Epps requested everyone take a few moments of silence to honor Councilman Chip Jackson who recently passed away and will be missed by all who had the opportunity to work with him. At RCCC's last meeting, Dr. Lydia Mattice Brandt, a professor at the University of South Carolina, gave an overview of the more than 30 monuments on the capitol grounds, when and why they were placed and where they have moved over the years, stressing the need to understand the physical and ideological relationship of the monuments and buildings. Dr. Brandt received a grant from RCCC and her guidebook on the monuments will be published next spring. The Columbia Rowing Club presented a concept plan for a walk-in launch since they have lost two docks since 2015. A search will be made to identify a possible corporate sponsor for the Club. Six FY-20 grants were rolled over due to the pandemic. Currently three historical markers are being planned for installation for this fiscal year. The two meetings held for the proposed Land Development Code (Code) went well and RCCC is taking a look at conservation issues connected to the Code. Councilman Manning recommended RCCC ensure their concerns are addressed in the proposed Code before it is provided to County Council. Council is preoccupied with several complicated issues such as the Dept. of Revenue and Transportation Penny concerns, and several Council seats will turn over at the end of the year. These factors will impact the decision making process.

Education Report

Ms. Cooper reported RSWCD co-hosted two networking events for teachers giving the educators the opportunity to explain what they need for the new school year. RSWCD will not offer in-person youth programs until local school districts allow community volunteers to visit classrooms. RSWCD co-sponsored the Take Action SC event and provided a program on soil

science and EEASC provided information on resources for teachers. Two hundred participants were involved in the virtual meeting. Virtual programming has been quite successful and in many cases has provided a broader audience. Staff is in the middle of planning The Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance Conference, an eight state regional event complicated by the necessity of being a virtual meeting. The USDA-NRCS Contribution Agreement for \$10,000 should pay out in full as hoped by the end of the agreement on September 30, with billing matching the amount of the allocation we received. Ms. Lindsay discussed the new Pollinator Conservation activity guide she and Ms. Cooper created to enhance RSWCD's existing educational programs. The beautifully designed guide is entitled "Where Would We Bee Without Pollinators" and should be ready for distribution by the end of the month. It will be available on our website for download and NACD will also post it on their website for distribution. The Mini-Grant applications offer two award cycles and will be due either September 30, 2020 or February 1, 2021. The theme for the Poster Contest will be Healthy Forests = Healthy Communities and entries are due April 30, 2021. A new stamp has been designed for the Seed Library which will eliminate so much time labeling the seeds. Seventeen varieties of seed have been ordered and staff expect to meet the needs of 600 requests. RSWCD continues to gain Instagram followers who then share their posts to greatly extend the range of our message. The July Plant of the Month was the Blanket Flower. Previous Plant of the Month posts are available on our website.

NRCS Report

Reginald Hall provided a brief update stating NRCS is working on 1500 EQIP applications with 34 million allocated in the state; 262 CSP applications with 4 million allocated and 30 CSP renewals for 3.2 million.

Old Business

Associate Commissioner Application

Four people have applied to become Associate Commissioners: Tim McSwain, Charles Weber, Mary Frances Hendrix, and James Kilgo. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the slate of four highly qualified candidates and was seconded by Commissioner Burts. Motion carried. Everyone looks forward to the benefits the new Associates will provide with their various professional backgrounds and life experiences.

FY-21 Budget

Ms. Cooper provided a brief recap of the proposed budget, which was reviewed in detail during a budget work session on July 1, and recommended reducing the NRCS Cooperative Agreement request amount to \$20,000. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the proposed budget as modified and was seconded by Commissioner Pride. Motion carried.

Laptop Purchase for Administrative Assistant

Mr. Epps explained delays have occurred in the attempt to purchase a laptop to enable Ms. Fisher to work remotely. Richland SWCD approved the purchase of a laptop during their June meeting, but Ms. Fisher would need a Virtual Private Network (VPN) set up to allow her to work remotely and County policy will not allow a VPN to be created on a non-County laptop.

Following discussion of this issue during the July 1 budget work session, Richland SWCD Commissioners directed staff to ask whether Richland County would provide a laptop for Ms. Fisher. Clayton Voignier, CP&D Director was contacted on July 2 regarding the purchase, and he responded on July 6 advising Mr. Epps that Ms. Fisher should direct her request and any associated concerns to her supervisor, Robin Carter, who was contacted on July 6. Ms. Carter finally responded on August 6 requesting more information. Ms. Fisher responded she has not had time to resolve these issues.

New Business

Election of Officers

Chairman Mullis asked if there were any nominations from the floor for officers. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to maintain the Board as is: Kenny Mullis- Chair, Jeff Laney- Vice Chair, and Jim Rhodes-Secretary/Treasurer. Vice-Chair Laney seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

Volunteer Agreement

As directed, staff provided a draft volunteer agreement/waiver based on the waiver used by the SC Department of Natural Resources. Following discussion, Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the agreement as presented. Commissioner Burts seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

Education Program Assistant Job Description

Ms. Cooper reported Ms. Lindsay began working with RSWCD originally as a “Conservation Intern” and was then promoted to “Education Program Assistant.” Her job duties have since evolved further, therefore it is recommended that both her position description and her job title be updated to be more consistent with the work she actually performs. A draft revision was provided. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the updated job description as presented and was seconded by Commissioner Laney. Motion carried.

RSWCD Logo

Following discussion, Commissioner Rhodes recommended maintaining the current logo for the present.

Strategic Planning

Ms. Cooper indicated there are five items to be considered for a strategic planning session: Affiliate Membership; Associate Commissioner Engagement; High School Programming; District Advocacy; and Committee Structure. She presented several options for conducting this work, including via email/survey; a separate virtual work session; or adding 10-15 minutes to monthly Board Meetings. Commissioner Rhodes suggested a separate meeting to include the new Associate Commissioners. Ms. Cooper will send out possible dates for the virtual strategic meeting.

Chairman Mullis explained the Annual Partnership Meeting will most likely not be taking place in Charleston in 2021. A firm decision has not been made yet. Some type of meeting will need

to take place to conduct business; a by-laws change will be necessary for this to occur in order to have a virtual meeting.

Next Meeting- September 14, 2020 @ 6pm via zoom.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Charlie Fisher, Admin. Asst./CC