



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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March 9, 2020

Lizard's Thicket, 6:00pm

402 Beltline Blvd., Columbia

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Mary Burts

Others Present

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager

Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant

Mary Hannah Lindsay, RSWCD Education Program Assistant

Yancey McLeod, Attorney

Russ St. Marie, Crickentree Homeowner

Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Mullis called the meeting to order and welcomed Yancey McLeod and Russ St. Marie. Commissioner Laney gave the invocation.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Mullis explained an additional letter of support needed to be added to the agenda after the Urban Agriculture Grant Agreement. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Laney to approve the agenda with the addition of the support letter.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 3 Regular Meeting and February 6 Special Called Meeting. Commissioner Laney seconded the motion to approve both sets of minutes. Motion carried.

Financial Report

Deposits totaled \$300.00; checks totaled \$4,407.23; and the ending balance is \$47,405.62. The bank statement is balanced with the checkbook.

Affiliate Membership

Commissioner Laney reported Al & Linda McNeill, longtime Affiliates, renewed at the \$100 level.

Crickentree

Chairman Mullis explained due to a lack of quorum at previous meetings, nothing has been discussed regarding Crickentree. Mr. McLeod asked the RSWCD to consider accepting a conservation easement on a proposed 250-foot buffer (approximately 40 acres) which would be established between the existing Crickentree subdivision and the proposed new subdivision where the former Crickentree Golf Course was located now owned by E Capital Investments. The proposed easement on the buffer could be Phase One of a potential model conservation development. Phase Two would incorporate comprehensive stream and tributary restoration; Phase Three could see part of the property becoming a sports and public recreation venue with educational areas. Survey work is now being done on 183 acres. Chairman Mullis explained the matter will be discussed later in Executive Session.

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

Mr. Epps reported the Land Program Planner position is still vacant, even though recommendations on applicants were provided to Administration. RCCC Chair Carol Kososki and RSWCD Chairman Mullis are scheduled to meet with the county's Administrator, Leonardo Brown, on March 10, 2020. RCCC voted to amend the scope of work on the Walden Pond project but not to exceed \$20,000 to complete the feasibility study. RCCC voted to renew the five year contract with the Columbia Rowing Club. A brief update was provided on the Fairfield County Wastewater Treatment Plant. Residents are still concerned about groundwater wells but the new plant would provide the highest level of treatment available. RCCC received four applications for Community Conservation Grants and twelve applications for Historic Preservation Grants.

Education Coordinator's Report

Ms. Cooper explained Jennifer Mancke, Richland County Conservation Primary Teacher of the Year, was honored at the recent Partnership Conference as the SC Conservation Teacher of the Year. Chairman Mullis was recognized as the outgoing SC Association of Conservation Districts President at the conference. The Greenville SWCD vehicle is painted with plants and flowers showcasing their highly successful seed library, which has created a new source of people learning about what Conservation Districts do. Ms. Lindsay has created a model for a Seed Sanctuary for Richland SWCD. RSWCD received a \$29,287 Urban Agriculture Conservation grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to set up pollinator conservation demonstration and outreach at Pinewood Lake Park. Administration has not yet given approval to proceed with project work at the Park. It may be necessary to choose another location if approval is not forthcoming. RSWCD partnered with the Environmental Education Association of SC to facilitate the February Midlands Meetup for 24 participants. Staff is assisting with planning the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance Conference scheduled for September 24-26th. RSWCD is still holding \$2,680.92 in leftover funds for the Midlands Local Food Collaborative from the SC Farmers Resource Rodeo to be spent on similar projects in the future. Ms. Lindsay reported RSWCD was one of four recipients nationwide for a Friends of NACD Award. The \$2,500 grant will fund the Seed Sanctuary. We are awaiting permission to

locate the seed cabinet in the Conservation Division office. This project will bring participants into the office for the seeds, planting tips, and additional exposure to “conservation.” Staff made eleven K-12 presentations to 318 participants and are currently developing a pollinator lesson plan. Mini-Grants have been judged and awarded. The recipients are Satchel Ford Elementary School (\$1,000), Westwood High School (\$500) and REACH Homeschool (\$500). RSWCD has awarded 75 Mini-Grants since 2012. We are still awaiting Administrative approval to publicize the grant winners. Slide show notes attached to minutes with details on additional staff support.

Letter of Support for Todd Beasley project

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Laney to provide Mr. Beasley a letter of support for his greenhouse project.

NRCS Report

Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez provided a written report for the meeting. Report attached to minutes

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to go into Executive Session to handle a personnel matter, pollinator conservation contract, and discuss the proposed Crickentree easement.

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion seconded by Commissioner Laney to come out of Executive Session. No actions were taken in Executive Session

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to continue with Ms. Lindsay’s 1099 and discuss how to handle payroll and benefits for a RSWCD employee with Ginger Spires, and Marc Cribb. Commissioner Laney seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Jeff Laney made a motion to approve the proposed Pollinator Garden Manager agreement subject to legal review. Commissioner Rhodes seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Jeff Laney made another motion to accept the Urban Agriculture Conservation grant, pursuant to County approval to proceed with project work at Pinewood Lake Park or identification of an alternate location. Commissioner Rhodes seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Commissioners directed staff to provide talking points on the proposed conservation easement.

Tickets were distributed for the upcoming Sportsman Classic.

The next meeting will be held Monday, April 13, 2020 at the Lizard’s Thicket on Beltline Blvd.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Charlie Fisher, Admin. Asst.