



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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October 12, 2020

Virtual Meeting/6:00pm

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners

Mary Hendrix

James Kilgo

Charles Weber

Tim McSwain

Others Present

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager

Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant

Anne Marie Johnson, Pollinator Garden Manager

April Jones, Pinehurst Farmers Market

Tyler Brown, SC DNR Program Manager

Commissioner Laney notified staff he was unable to attend the meeting.

Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Mullis called the meeting to order and Commissioner Rhodes gave the invocation.

Introductions were made.

Pinehurst Farmers Market Presentation

Ms. Jones explained two grocery stores recently closed within the Pinehurst neighborhood. The Pinehurst Market was founded to fill the gap and has been providing local SC food to the residents for the past two years. The Market through the Pinehurst Community Action nonprofit is looking for partnerships, funding sources, and grant opportunities. COVID food boxes are being given out during this time of need and food insecurity and people are learning they have a resource in the Market. The Market operates every Wednesday from 1:30pm-3:00 pm and is comprised of farmers from Eastover, Lexington, Blythewood, and Gaston. Funding would be used to educate and advocate food justice and food sovereignty, hold educational

programs about the benefits of growing your own vegetables, and further discussion regarding the agricultural history of SC and heirloom crops. Mr. Epps asked Ms. Jones if she can recommend potential volunteers for the Pollinator Garden. Mr. Epps suggested RCCC & RSWCD could potentially provide grant funding to support the efforts of Pinehurst Community Action.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Mullis recommended amending the agenda by moving Associate Commissioner remarks after approval of the minutes. Approvals for the FY-21 Cooperative Agreement and a draft letter to County Council detailing RSWCD successes need to be added under New Business. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the amended agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Burts. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2020 meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Burts. Motion carried.

Associate Commissioner Remarks

Tim McSwain and Mary Hendrix both reported on what a good job Anne Marie Johnson is doing in the Pollinator Garden.

Financial Report

Deposits totaled \$17,334.25; checks and debits totaled \$3,177.21; ending balance is \$60,059.80 as of September 30. The bank statement is balanced with the checkbook.

Affiliate Membership

Mary and Al Burts, Hunter Suggs, Carol Kososki, and SC State Fair have renewed their memberships.

Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report

Ms. Johnson reported the fall garden is on track with the goals of the grant for maintenance and installation. Fall flowers are bringing diversity with a variety of caterpillars and butterflies. Mary Francis, Tim, Buddy, Carol and Gail are doing a fantastic job with weeding, garden maintenance, and clean-up. Goldenrod, Asters, and Rudbeckia are still blooming and attracting non-bee pollinators. The next step for the garden is to prep for blueberries, assess and adjust plantings for next year, make the plant purchases and complete the plant list that will be listed on the RSWCD website.

Commissioner Mullis has sent a letter to County Administrator Leonardo Brown requesting permission to apply for grants to provide additional funding for the Pollinator Garden. Councilman Chakisse Newton has already given her approval.

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

Mr. Epps said RCCC received a grant from the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC). GIC is collaborating with SC Forestry Commission to help communities make strategic decisions to conserve or expand tree cover. Richland County's GIS department staff is doing remote sensing analysis to track tree canopy over time in the Hollingshed Creek Watershed. A new rule has

gone into effect and changed the definition of Waters of the United States. The EPA and Army Corp of Engineers published the new rule which went into effect June 22, 2020. Many wetlands and headwater streams are no longer covered under the Waters of the US definition and will not require a permit to fill or damage; therefore, there is no public notice of the land being disturbed. The Charleston Army Corp of Engineers has reviewed several permits and, under the new definition, determined a permit is not required. Commissioner Rhodes asked for a summary of regulations that have changed for Commissioners to look at to see what can be done on a state-wide basis. Work is continuing on the Land Development Code rewrites. Potential easement and land donations are under consideration. Budget cuts have been implemented by County Council affecting the RCCC Historical Grants and more cuts may be initiated; staff is trying to determine their impact on programs. RCCC requested the grant funding be re-instated. Nancy Stone-Collum will retire effective 10/30/20 and a Lunch-and-Learn will be held in her honor on October 23 at the Pinewood Lake Park. Since the county is in a hiring freeze, RCCC sent a letter to Administrator Brown justifying why the position needed be filled. Charlie Fisher is also planning to retire at the end of the year, leaving Ms. Cooper and Mr. Epps with five positions to cover, which will result in a reduction in programs and services.

Education Report

RSWCD co-hosted the Environmental Education Association of SC's (EEASC's) September virtual Midlands Meetup for 20 participants and co-hosted and co-sponsored the EEASC/Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance's 2020 virtual conference for 140 registered participants representing 9 southeastern states. Ms. Cooper and Angela Vandelay, Stormwater Engineer, presented a water quality improvement success story from the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed at the Southeast Stormwater Association's Annual Conference. Measured bacteria levels in this watershed showed significant reductions following the implementation of two Section 319 Water Quality Improvement grants since 2014. RSWCD mailed vegetable, herb, and wildflower seed to the 1,000th Seed Sanctuary participant in September; a total of >6,000 seed packets have been distributed to local residents through this program since April. Staff worked with the Richland County Public Information Office to produce additional new pollinator conservation outreach videos as a part of its "Bee-Friend Local Pollinators" Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant. RSWCD will announce its winner of the Teacher of the Year contest later this week. A farmer/chef mashup event is being planned for spring by the Midlands Local Food Collaborative. Social Media presence for RSWCD continues to thrive via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Staff and Commissioners participated in meetings of the SC Project Learning Tree Steering Committee, SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition, and Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance. Staff also provided administrative support for the Midlands Local Food Collaborative.

NRCS Report

No report was provided.

Old Business

Pollinator Demonstration Garden Project

At their last meeting, the RSWCD Board voted to pursue funding for another year to continue work on the garden. Following that decision, Chairman Mullis asked RCCC Commissioner Gail Rodriguez to ask Councilwoman Chakisse Newton for her blessing on the proposal to pursue

additional funding to continue work in the Garden; Ms. Newton has agreed. Following this approval, Chairman Mullis has asked Administrator Leonardo Brown for permission to proceed. If/when Mr. Brown, the County Administrator, gives the approval to proceed, then RSWCD can move forward searching for grant funding.

New Business

Cooperative Agreement

RSWCD has been approved for a \$16,800 Contribution Agreement with USDA-NRCS through the SC Association of Conservation Districts for FY21. RSWCD received \$10,000 through this Agreement in FY20 and requested \$20,000 for FY21. The terms of the Contribution Agreement are the same as last year. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion for RSWCD to enter into the FY21 Contribution Agreement; he will continue to serve as the designated RSWCD representative to sign the Agreement and Task Support Documents. Commissioner Burts seconded the motion which carried.

Draft Letter to Council

During the last RSWCD board meeting, Commissioners expressed a desire to send a letter to members of County Council documenting RSWCD's FY20 successes. A draft letter was circulated to Commissioners. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve and send the draft letter to members of County Council; Commissioner Burts seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Brown played a video for meeting attendees produced by SCDNR highlighting the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Conservation Partnership. Jeff Wilson, featured in the video, is the current Chair of SC Association of Conservation Districts. Mr. Wilson and his family operate Cotton Hill Farm, a multi-generational farm in Chester County that uses best management practices.

Next Meeting –November 9, 2020 via zoom

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Charlie Fisher, Admin. Asst./CC