



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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Meeting Minutes

January 08, 2024 6pm

Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, SC 29209

Commissioners Present

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Mary Burts

Tim McSwain

Associate Commissioners Present

Sarah Burnham

Logan Richardson

Mary Beth McSwain

Mary Hendrix

Charles Weber

Others Present

Quinton Epps

Chanda Cooper

Val Morris

Aric Jensen

Jennifer Mancke

Welcome and Call to Order: Laney called the meeting to order and T. McSwain gave the invocation at 6:01 pm.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: T. McSwain made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Burts. The motion was brought to a vote, and it passed unanimously. Additionally, T. McSwain made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Burts. The motion was brought to a vote, and it also passed unanimously.

Financial Report: Cooper provided the following financial overview:

Operating Account (12/31/23 Statement)

- Beginning Balance: \$73,561.15 (12/01/23)
- Deposits and Credits: \$1,400.00
- Expenses and Debits: \$5,227.02
- Ending Balance: \$69,734.13 (12/31/23)

Credit Card (01/05/24 Statement)

- Beginning Balance: \$1,343.56 (12/05/23)
- Payments: \$1,343.56
- Purchases: \$430.31
- Ending Balance: \$430.41 (01/05/24) <paid in full (01/08/2024)

Easement Stewardship Account (12/31/23 Statement)

- Starting Account Value: \$52,770.16 (12/01/23)
- Ending Account Value: \$52,952.32 (12/31/23)
- Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$53,345.14 (12/31/23)

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (11/31/23 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$252.51 (12/01/23)
- Ending Balance: \$252.51 (12/31/23)

PayPal Account (12/31/23 Statement)

- Beginning Available Balance: \$0.00 (12/01/23)
- Ending Available Balance: \$100.00 (12/31/23)

Friends of RSWCD Report: Laney reported, since the last board meeting on 11/13/23, there have been no new Friends, and four renewals totaling \$500. The current count of Friends stands at 26 (3 of which are Honorary Friends). Our donation goal for the fiscal year is \$5,000.00 by 06/30/2024; as of today, we have received \$2,293.00.

Administrative Report: Morris reported Statement of Economic Interest reports are due by noon on 03/30/2024. The 2024 SC Conservation Partnership Conference is scheduled for 01/22/2024-01/24/2024 and there is still time to register. Lastly, she reported commissioners can apply or reapply for their commissioner license tag.

NRCS: None Reported

SCDNR: Cooper shared DNR’s monthly accomplishments report and informed the group of SCDNR key dates and deadlines for the year of 2024.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber stated they didn’t have a meeting last week and there was no report. Epps reported Jessica Mackey and Derrek Pugh were recently elected as the Chair and Vice Chair of Richland County Council, respectively. Epps has hired a second Administrative Assistant to support the Conservation Division, and the Community Planning & Development Department has hired a Sustainability Planner who will also provide support for Conservation Division programs. Their orientation day is set for 02/12/2024.

Education:

Cooper announced RSWCD was awarded a \$10,000.00 grant from Dominion Energy. Kirstin Bullington of Richland Two Institute of Innovation (R212) was selected as SC Conservation Teacher of the Year (Secondary). Cooper reported on RSWCD’s education activities since the last meeting on 11/13/23:

- **Mini-Grants:** Next Mini-Grant application deadline is 01/22/2024. St. Joseph Catholic School and Brockman Elementary have provided progress reports about the hydroponic farm stands they were awarded through the Mini-Grant program.
- **Palmetto Pride Partnership:** RSWCD partnered with Palmetto Pride to assist Bookman Road Elementary with their campus litter cleanup project.
- **Arbor Day:** RSWCD celebrated Arbor Day on Friday, 12/1/23, at Watkins-Nance Elementary School with a tree planting and a school assembly featuring Councilman Paul Livingston and Edu-tainer Tim Womick. Councilman Livingston delivered a proclamation for Arbor Day in Richland County and RSWCD distributed goody bags with items from the US Forest Service, SC Forestry Commission, DNR, and Palmetto Pride to all students and staff. In addition, Arbor Day was also celebrated at Hopkins Elementary School through the Girl's in STEM program.
- **2023 Holiday Drop-In:** Was well attended. Many of the councilmembers attended along with other affiliates and partners. Many thanks were given to Commissioner Burts for her faithfulness and dedication in the organizing the Holiday Drop-In.
- **Soda City Market:** On 11/18/2023 RSWCD had a pop-up Seed Sanctuary event at the Soda City Market along with Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) to promote and educate the public about the different programs that are being offered. A special thanks to Commissioner and Associate Commissioner McSwain for attending and helping spread the word.
- **Seed Sanctuary:** RSWCD distributed ~7,867 seed packets in 2023 and fulfilled 1,017 mail requests. 66+ individual volunteers, including BlueThumb Award Winner Joseph Ravindran, assisted with seed packing. Distribution continues at 2020 Hampton St. and Richland Library Eastover. A pop-up event was held at Soda City on 11/18/2023.
- **Communications:** RSWCD's e-newsletter has 4,424 (+80) subscribers; Facebook has 1,236 followers (+17); and Instagram has 753 followers (+10). The Richland County Ag + Art Tour Facebook has 1,035 followers (+3) and Instagram has 655 (-1).
- **Richland County Ag + Art Tour:** The event will be held 6/8-9/24 and will feature up to 20 tour sites. The committee is still seeking \$5,000 in sponsorships. The next planning meeting will be held on 01/16/2024 at 10:00 am. Cooper consulted with the Lancaster County Ag + Art Tour planning committee.
- **Poster Contest:** The 2024 K-12 poster contest theme is "May the Forest Be With You Always." Entries are due 4/12/24. RSWCD will provide 24 sheets of poster paper to interested schools.
- **Environmental Education Association of SC (EEASC):** RSWCD staff are serving on the EEASC conference committee to help plan the 2024 EEASC conference, which will be held 6/20-22/24 at USC Upstate. The title of the conference is Climate ResiliencEE. Staff are also providing support for the EEASC 2024 fundraiser.
- **Adopt-A-Stream (AAS):** RSWCD's AAS kit continues to be used by two community volunteers each month.
- **Strategic Planning:** RSWCD staff are providing consulting services for strategic planning for several organizations, including EEASC, Midlands Local Food Collaborative, SC Project Learning Tree, and the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition.
- **Classroom Presentations:** Jennifer Mancke led classroom presentations for the following schools: St. Joseph Catholic School – Farmstand Setup, 24 students; Dutch Fork Elementary School – Science Fair Mentorship, 3 students; Brockman Elementary School – Supersoil, 25 students; Cutler Jewish Day School – Watershed Explorer x 2, 47 students; Brockman Elementary School – Resource Conservation/Plann, 23 students; Meadowfield Elementary School – Science

Fair Judging; and Brockman Elementary School – Science Fair Judging. Commissioner Burts also assisted with the science fair judging.

- **School Mentorship:** Mancke also facilitated Green Step School mentor meetings at Brockman Elementary School, Richland Two Institute of Innovation (R2I2), St. Joseph Catholic School and Friends of Columbia Community Garden.

Conservation Items Before County Council: None reported.

Commissioner Advocacy: Cooper reported Councilman Livingston attend the Arbor Day celebration at Watkins-Nance Elementary school and five councilmembers attended the Holiday Drop-In.

Old Business: Advocacy Plan Review: Commissioners reviewed the FY22 RSWCD Commissioner Advocacy Plan.

- **T. McSwain moved to add the Commissioner Advocacy Plan to the Strategic Plan as an additional goal. The motion was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.**

New Business:

SCACD Account Authorization: RSWCD previously granted SCACD president, Jeff Wilson, signatory authority to conduct business related to certain USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service Contribution Agreements on its behalf. President Wilson's term is coming to an end and Ben Setzler will assume the presidency during the SC Conservation Partnership Conference. SCACD requests that Setzler be granted the same authorization as Wilson to conduct business under the SCACD Contribution Agreement Account.

- **T. McSwain moved to grant incoming South Carolina Association of Conservation District president Carl “Ben” Setzler, III signatory authority to conduct business related to the existing USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Contribution Agreement #NR214639XXXXC014 on behalf of the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District, and to authorize Chairman J. Kenneth Mullis to send a letter documenting this authorization to the NRCS. The motion was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.**

2024 Summer Internship Proposal: Cooper proposed creating a Summer Agritourism Internship. The intern would work 20 hours a week from 05/15/2024 to 08/15/2024 with an hourly pay of \$16.83. The wage increases from \$12.00 per hour to \$16.83 per hour aligns with Richland County’s new policy to pay a living wage for all positions, and with new eeGuidance on Equitable Pay & Hiring.

- **T. McSwain moved to accept the proposal made by Cooper. The motion was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.**

Budget Amendments: In order to fund the Agritourism Internship, Cooper recommended the following budget amendments: increase the intern time line item to \$3000.00; increase the intern travel line item to \$231.18; increase the payroll taxes line item to \$275; and increase the payroll fees line item to \$373.57.

- **T. McSwain moved to accept the proposed budget amendments recommended by Cooper. The motion was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Session: N/A

Public Input: None reported.

Next Meeting: The next board meeting is scheduled for Monday, 02/12/24 at 6pm at Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, SC 29209.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:13 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Val Morris, Conservation Administrative Assistant