



2020 Hampton Street • Room 3063A
P.O. Box 192 • Columbia, SC 29202
(803) 576-2083

Minutes March 21, 2016

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Ann Furr, Glenice Pearson, Becky Bailey, Jim Thomas, Virginia Sanders, and Jennifer Carter

Absent: Charles Weber, Sam Holland, and Margaret DuBard

Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Department
Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Department
Charlie Fisher, Conservation Department
Tracy Hegler, Richland County Planning Department Director
Brenda Carter, Richland County Planning Department GIS Manager

Chair, Carol Kososki welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:35pm

Approval of Agenda: Ann Furr moved and Glenice Pearson seconded the motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes from February 22: Ann moved and Glenice seconded the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Election of Officers

Nancy explained the slate of candidates as follows:

Carol Kososki, Chair

Glenice Pearson, Vice Chair for Historic Committee

John Grego, Vice Chair for Conservation Committee

Virginia Sanders, Treasurer

Ann moved to accept the slate of candidates by acclamation and was seconded by Jim Thomas. Motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Chair

Carol reported the Blue Ribbon Flood Recovery Committee continues to meet bi-weekly. The Community Develop Block Grant (CDBG) program has \$300,000 unallocated funds that were approved for a pilot project to rebuild up to 5 owner-occupied low to moderate income homes under the aegis of the St. Bernard Project; funds must be spent by the end of July. The county will receive \$23.5 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for flood recovery efforts; 51% must be spent to benefit low to moderate income families. Eight public and stakeholders engagement meetings

will be held throughout the county. The CDBG-Disaster Recovery Action Plan will establish a road map for long term recovery, complement (not duplicate) current recovery efforts, identify critical issues and unmet needs, develop and prioritize projects and actions to address immediate needs and opportunities for long term resilience, maximize recovery and resilience value of limited CDBG-DR resources, ensure program and project eligibility under CDBG-DR, and catalogue additional projects for alternate funding assistance.

Quinton explained \$10 million in FEMA funds under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program will fund the top 3 priority items - residential and commercial buyouts and stormwater improvements.

FEMA prefers to buy out a cluster of homes or businesses rather than a house; therefore, places like Timberlane and California streets are highly recommended. Whatever is bought out will become permanent public open space and owned by the county or municipality. The requests for conservation easement funds and watershed conservation districts were ruled ineligible. Carol asked Tracy Hegler, Planning Dept. Director, what she knows about the City of Forest Acres Police Station which is in the floodplain. Tracy replied that Forest Acres is most likely working with Emergency Management staff. Quinton will follow up with Emergency Management.

Treasurer's Report

Virginia referred RCCC members to their copy of the financial report. Nancy wanted to address John Grego's email question regarding the February minutes that said this year should result in the least amount of unspent funds. The Professional Services balance and the Prior Year Rollover total \$150,000 and of that \$140,000 is committed to Owens Field. This leaves \$10,000 for other expenses such as appraisals and a historical marker. In prior years there has been more money left in the account. The USC Initiative has spent 40% of their budget and \$65,000 is encumbered for the Concept Plan for Tourism & Economic Development in Lower Richland. A committee has been selected to evaluate the proposals which are due April 12. RCCC paid for the postage (\$156.80) to mail out invitations from the COWASEE Basin partners for a free workshop on how to manage bottomland forest for songbirds.

Conservation Committee Report

John explained four well-written grant proposals were submitted. The committee met and after presentations decided to fund all four requests. John made a motion on behalf of the committee to fully fund all four requests. The motion was seconded by Ann and passed unanimously.

Historic Committee Report

Glenice stated nine applications were received and all but one was recommended for funding. Glenice made a motion on behalf of the committee to fund eight applications at the suggested funding level. Jim Thomas seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Green Infrastructure Model

Quinton defined Green Infrastructure as "an interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations." The purpose of the GIS-based model is to help conserve our natural resources based on future land use and priority areas. Accelerated consumption of land and the fragmentation of open land are the primary conservation challenges today. The benefits of the model include preserving biodiversity and wildlife habitat, protecting water quality and supply, and providing cost-effective stormwater management and hazard mitigation. The first steps in green infrastructure planning are to set goals, review data, create asset maps, and assess risks. The final phases are to determine the opportunities and implement the plan.

In developing the GIS model, Brenda Carter, GIS Manager in the Planning Dept., explained asset maps were developed to determine what we have and what do we want to conserve. Habitat cores were identified and ranked according to their estimated quality/integrity based on ten criteria. These include: depth of interior, species diversity, rare, threatened and endangered species, length of streams within forest, soil diversity, wetlands, aquatic habitat and fragmentation index. The resulting map shows four priority areas for conservation which matches with the future land use map approved in the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element update. Quinton observed that it was important to show the science-based green infrastructure model goes hand-in-hand with Planning. The priority areas will guide easement purchases. Everyone agreed the model will be a beneficial tool and Carol asked Quinton to make a presentation before County Council.

Becky Bailey inquired about Ft. Jackson's efforts since the flood, whether or not they were participating/coordinating with the county. Quinton replied that the county participates in a Joint Use Land Study for lands adjacent to the fort and Tracy said Ft. Jackson did participate in the Comprehensive Plan stakeholder meetings. Carol indicated it would be beneficial to have a representative from the fort on the Gills Creek Watershed Association.

Conservation Director's Report

Quinton said everything was covered in earlier discussions.

Conservation Coordinator's Report

Wateree River Heritage Preserve

Staff recently met with Willie Simmons and biologist Travis Bennett from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to discuss preserve issues. The draft management plan for the Wateree River Heritage Preserve has been completed and is waiting on a sign-off before being released to the public for a 30-day comment period. Much of the management plan addresses the mitigation activities – restoring wetlands and water flow. At least one road in the northern section will be removed making it difficult if not impossible to use the boat ramp to the Wateree River. There will be 203 days with no hunting and 143 days with joint use. Nancy expressed Commission concern about closures on Saturdays and holidays and relayed complaints about uncomfortable encounters with hunters. DNR is requesting one year to work out conflicts and make adjustments. Anyone visiting the property should sign-in so numbers and types of users can be tracked. A cultural inventory will be conducted and could take up to 45 months; the research will be used to develop a curriculum for students. DNR does not have the resources to provide an educational coordinator so this might be an opportunity for partnership.

Gills Creek Greenway A

The recent public meeting had a good turnout; over 200 comments were submitted with a two-to-one ratio in favor of the greenway according to a news report. The consultants are working on redesigning the route with the trail on the west of Gills Creek instead of the east side. Carol requested a debriefing from Anthony Lawrence from the Transportation Penny team which is scheduled for Thursday morning.

The Administration and Finance Committee will meet tomorrow and will consider two matters pertaining to RCCC: approving the transfer of the \$20,000 Gills Creek Watershed Association grant to the Owens Field project and moving forward with the purchase of the Upper Tract. Carol thanked Margaret DuBard, Becky Bailey and Virginia Sanders for speaking with their council members concerning the Upper Tract proposal.

Other

Glenice commented on her recent reflections of her effectiveness in serving on RCCC. Is she fulfilling the role she has been called to do? What are the members' obligations to council and to the district? How do we know we've done a good job? It would be useful for Ken Driggers, Legal Counsel to RCCC, to discuss how RCCC fits into the conservation field. Carol liked the idea of a "State of the Commission" update and lessons learned. Becky suggested a refresher course/retreat and how other stakeholders fit together. Carol stated a summer retreat will make a good topic for a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant