



2020 Hampton Street • Room 3063A  
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## Minutes October 25, 2015

### Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Jim Thomas, Charles Weber, Ann Furr, Glenice Pearson, Jennifer Carter, Sam Holland, and Margaret DuBard

Absent: Becky Bailey, Virginia Sanders

### Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Department  
Charlie Fisher, Conservation Department  
Ken Driggers, Contract Legal Counsel  
Andrea Bolling, Richland County Floodplain Coordinator  
Erich Miarka, Gills Creek Watershed Association Coordinator  
Valeria Jackson, Richland County Community Development Director  
Bob Guilds, Environmental Attorney

Jim Thomas asked for a moment of silence to acknowledge those who lost their lives and/or property from the flooding of October 4.

Chair, Carol Kososki called the meeting to order at 3:35pm, welcomed visitors, and made introductions.

**Approval of Agenda:** John Grego moved and Ann Furr seconded the motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes:** John moved to approve the minutes from September 28 and was seconded by Ann. Motion carried.

### Report of the Chair

Carol explained that the purpose of today's meeting is to determine what lessons can be learned from the recent flood and dam failures and to develop strategies to present to County Council. In the absence of Virginia Sanders, the Treasurer's Report was deferred to next month.

### 2015 Flood and Dam Failure Discussion

Quinton Epps researched flood related recovery options on a national level and found a lot of information available for guidance. He outlined five recovery options in a handout and highlighted three: buy-out programs partially funded by FEMA, issuing bonds as NJ did after super storm Sandy to provide low-interest loans to rebuild dams, and developing a flood preparedness plan as Nashville did.

Quinton stressed the FEMA buy-out requires a local sponsor for the 75/25 match, must meet a cost/benefit analysis, and takes from 18 months to two years.

Three speakers were asked to provide information and insight on the recent events.

Andrea Bolling, Richland County's Floodplain Coordinator, works on permit and project approvals for the 1700 structures in the 100-year floodplain. The county is working with FEMA on damage assessments. Structures located in a 100-year floodplain are regulated and the county must stay compliant with the federal insurance guidelines as to whether or how structures can be built back or bought out. A wealth of information is available at the SC Emergency Management Division [www.scemd.org](http://www.scemd.org). Charles Weber asked whether FEMA would assist with trail damage and was advised to apply so FEMA could make an assessment. Charles also warned RCCC to carefully evaluate trail design for greenways to minimize damage from high water.

Erich Miarka passed out a map of the Gills Creek Watershed with a timeline for the dam failures which ran as an ad in *The State*. Gills Creek watershed is 75 sq. miles with over 100 impoundments including 12 large lakes. Prior to the record rainfall event, DHEC issued a request to reservoir/dam operators in the state to lower their water levels. At least 5 operators in the watershed did lower their levels prior to the historic rainfall of Oct. 3 and 4 that dropped 20 in. in Gills Creek. On Sunday three dams failed at Pine Tree Lake, Cary Lake and Semmes Lake on Fort Jackson and on Monday the dams at Upper Rockyford and Rockyford Lakes failed, all five of which were earthen dams with concrete spillways. Several other dams were overtopped and/or suffered major erosion. Forest Lake was renovated 25 years ago with a concrete outer shell and operators had lowered its levels sufficiently to buffer the excess water from upstream.

DHEC has issued an order for all high-hazard dams to lower their water levels. 86% of dams in SC are privately owned and many are owned by homeowners' associations with little knowledge of how to manage the lake or the level of liability connected with it. Glenice asked if anyone had done a comparable analysis for Lower Richland. Erich responded that the area had not lost structures like Gills Creek did due to the dam failures but had suffered from many road and bridge closures and contaminated wells. Bob Guild discussed the inadequate funding for DHEC and their lack of legal enforcement authority which would require legislative action to change. He pointed out the sedimentation in many lakes impairs any stormwater capacity the lakes could have provided. Carol is concerned about the lack of communication and coordination. She stated the next step should be to create a roundtable with government and private stakeholders modeled on the approach used for development of the open code and facilitated by the Center of Watershed Protection. The purpose would be to develop policy recommendations to prevent future devastation.

Valeria Jackson, Director of RC Community Development, explained the department will be a participant in the recovery efforts. Currently the department is in data collection mode and should receive Housing Urban Development (HUD) funds for disaster recovery. HUD funds the acquisition of properties with significant damage in the floodway for demolition which are then returned to green space and can never be developed. The turnaround period is 12-24 months. Coordination with the city is expected due to the scope of the disaster. Valeria asked for suggestions of good places for green spaces.

### **Conservation Committee**

John made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss negotiations for conservation easements. Charles Weber seconded the motion which passed.

John made a motion to move out of Executive Session and was seconded by Charles. Motion passed.

John made a motion to approve the purchase price discussed in Executive Session and was seconded by Charles. Motion passed unanimously.

Richland County Conservation Commission members and staff from Congaree National Park held a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 2 to commemorate the early history of transportation in the area with a dedication of a historic marker on Highway 601 and the grand opening of the historic Bates Ferry Trail. County Council approved RCCC's request to reallocate \$26,916 in grant funding to the Wiley Kennedy Foundation for the Bethlehem Nature area.

Ken Driggers reported negotiations on the Lower Richland property were close to completion but in light of the recent flooding problems it was decided it was an inopportune time to proceed; therefore, this project is temporarily on hold.

#### **Historic Committee**

Glenice Pearson referred everyone to their copy of Dr. Bobby Donaldson's activity report on the Richland County Documentary Historic Initiative. The Slave Dwelling Conference in North Charleston Oct. 8-10 attended by Nancy and Glenice was outstanding. They found opportunities the new digital technology opens up particularly fascinating. ETV has developed a virtual tour of four African American villages at Hobcaw Barony as part of the Between the Rivers project. The conference may come to Columbia next year and would give us another chance to partner with Joe McGill.

#### **2015 Flood**

Carol requested Quinton put together a one page document for RCCC members centered on the creation of a roundtable process, including who should be involved and what issues should be addressed.

The dedication ceremony for the Wateree River Heritage Preserve will be Wednesday, November 18 at 2:00pm. RCCC Members will receive invitations to the event.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant