



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

Minutes
November 18, 2019

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Charles Weber, Buddy Atkins, Tim McSwain, Gail Rodriguez, Robert Squirewell, and Jim Thomas

Absent: Sam Holland

Vacant: Districts 4 and 10

Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division

Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Division

Charlie Fisher, Conservation Division

Clayton Voignier, Community Planning & Development Department

Mike Niermeier, Transportation Department

Call to Order

Chair Carol Kososki welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:30pm.

Approval of Agenda

Charles Weber made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by Tim McSwain. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Charles made a motion to approve the minutes of October 21 as amended. A discussion about a sentence concerning a change of focus for the Lower Richland Tourism Plan resulted in a slight rewording of the sentence. The motion was seconded by Jim Thomas and was approved by a 4-2 show of hands.

Report of Chair

Carol listed the members of the Historic and Conservation Committees which have changed recently due to vacancies. Serving on the Historic Committee are Sam Holland, Jim Thomas, Robert Squirewell, and Gail Rodriguez. The Conservation Committee consists of John Grego, Charles Weber, Tim McSwain, and Buddy Atkins. There is one opening on each committee due to the vacancies from Districts 4 (Livingston) and 10 (Myers). Carol asked for help in talking with councilmembers about appointing new representatives.

Treasurer's Report

Newly elected treasurer, Robert Squirewell deferred to Nancy Stone-Collum until they can meet and review the report. Nancy reported Ken Driggers' contract is paid out. Carol requested staff contact Finance concerning the balance forward on the Conservation Fund which should be available by February 2020.

Transportation Penny Greenways Update

Mike Niermeier, Director of the Transportation Department since mid-March and who previously headed up the Capital Improvement Projects for the Richland Renaissance initiatives, provided a Penny Greenways update. Council has been reluctant to make any changes affecting the list of referendum projects so the greenways realignment is particularly significant because it will be the first time Council has voted to amend the ordinance authorizing the penny sales tax for transportation. Mike expressed his gratitude for RCCC support and endorsement of reallocating greenways funds to viable, referendum-approved greenways. He expressed surprise at the Nov. 5 vote for second reading which was approved by 5 members, opposed by 4, with two members not voting.

Transportation staff, County Administrator Brown, and Asst. County Administrator Thompson met with Councilmembers McBride and Dickerson to provide answers to their questions regarding greenways. Staff reviewed the documentation, prioritization, and process followed to arrive at the recommendations first presented in March 2019. A public hearing and third reading is scheduled for Dec. 10. With approval, design work and right-of-way acquisition can resume (Gills Creek) or begin in the case of several greenways.

Charles asked what other road blocks are there to which Mike replied cash flow. He said many projects had not been properly thought out and costs have escalated during the years. Penny staff will do an independent evaluation, look at available funding, design process, and current rankings to make recommendations for the referendum-approved road, sidewalk, bike and pedestrian projects.

Buddy explained that Gills Creek Watershed Association (GCWA), RCCC staff and other stakeholders developed a master plan for a greenway from Kilbourne Road to Shop Road (Gills Creek Middle Watershed) in 2013. The city of Columbia incorporated the plan into their commercial node study. Last week, the city Board of Zoning Appeals gave approval for a car wash to be built on the former Title Max property destroyed during the 2015 flood. The car wash will be in the middle of where the greenway would go. Part of the agreement is for a right-of-way from Bi Lo to be given to the county for the greenway, but there is not enough room for a trail once the car wash is built. Although the property is located in the county, the city plans to annex it. Buddy emphasized the need for coordination between city and county so as not to waste staff time, funds, and greenway opportunities.

Carol thanked Mike for reconstituting the Greenway Advisory Committee. RCCC will continue its efforts to get approval for the greenways realignment at third reading. Nancy committed to sending background information on RCCC involvement with the greenways to commissioners.

Report of the Community Planning & Development Director

Updates

Clayton Voignier reported he had no new information on the legal contract for RCCC or the capital improvement project process to proceed. Carol pointed out RCCC has no legal help due to the expired contract with Ken Driggers. Clayton advised any easement questions should be directed to the county attorney. The request to submit the letter of intent for a Community Tree Strategies grant is on Council's agenda for tomorrow.

Buddy questioned the necessity for Council to approve low-level expense projects rather than getting administrator approval. Carol read the Procurement threshold amounts which she thought should have eliminated the need for Council to approve the legal contract. Clayton said his approach is to go back to the ordinance and what it affects. His understanding is anything that falls outside of an annual project list approved by Council must go to Council for approval. After further discussion, Buddy made a motion for staff to draft a letter to Administration for guidance on administrative and procedural processes concerning what needs to be approved by Administration versus Council. Charles seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Clayton assured Carol that a flood mitigation project on Gills Creek in Forest Acres is still on the CBDG-DR eligible project list and should be funded.

Conservation Division Manager's Report

Quinton said due to time constraints, the Longtown walking trails informational item can be deferred to a future meeting.

Charles made a motion to extend the meeting an additional 15 minutes. Tim seconded the motion which carried.

Conservation Coordination Report

Plastic Bag Ordinance

Nancy reported she is working with 10-15 other county staff people weekly on the plastic bag ordinance. The ordinance Council passed on second reading bans all bags less than 4 mils and paper bags with less than 40% post-consumable waste recyclable content. Plastic and paper bags would be available at a cost of no less than ten cents unless re-useable bags are brought from home. County staff has one year to create an educational program and bring back recommendations to Council. To assess public opinion, two surveys for residents and businesses will be available December 6 with a deadline for responses of March 18. Paper surveys will be available at multiple county locations. A [webpage](#) will explain what the ordinance means, provide links to the survey and facts about plastic bags. A stakeholder letter has been drafted and will be mailed out to a wide variety of businesses and organizations letting them know about the process and that meetings will be planned for the spring. On October 29, the SC Aquarium, an RCCC grantee, facilitated a workshop at Riverbanks Zoo with various organizations to present the Litter Fee Digital Journal. The Congaree Riverkeeper was impressed with the tool and will have a clean-up Saturday, December 14 which will demonstrate firsthand how the Litter Free Digital Journal works.

Updates

The Historic Committee has a meeting scheduled this Wednesday with the county's Library staff, historic organizations, and professors to brainstorm what a Heritage Center would look like. The CO Spann Medical Office historic marker will be unveiled November 21. The Conservation Division Holiday Drop-in is December 10. Zoom Grants will be launched on December 3 and applications will be accepted through February 3rd. Charles invited RCCC members and staff to a Palmetto Trail walk to demonstrate the positive aspects a trail can bring to a community. Nancy will send details.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Fisher