



2020 Hampton Street • Room 3063A
 P.O. Box 192 • Columbia, SC 29202
 (803) 576-2080

Minutes
November 15, 2021

Attendance

Commissioner	District	Present
Charles Weber	1	Yes
Tim McSwain	2	Yes
Sam Holland	3	No
Glenice Pearson	4	Yes
Vacant	5	--
John Grego	6	Yes
Robert Squirewell	7	No
Deborah DePaoli	8	Yes
Vacant	9	--
Darrell Jackson Jr.	10	Yes
Gail Rodriguez	11	Yes

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Walker McDonald	Conservation Division
Ryan Smoker	Columbia Rowing Club
Hisham Elkazzaz	Columbia Rowing Club
Cynthia Elkazzaz	Columbia Rowing Club

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:34 pm. All members, staff, and guests participated by Zoom video conference. Grego suggested Columbia Rowing Club presentation start immediately after Report of the Chair so that they can leave the meeting after the presentation.

Approval of Agenda

⇒ **Weber moved to approve the agenda which was seconded by Rodriguez. Motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Minutes

⇒ **McSwain moved to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2021 meeting and was seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

Report of the Chair

- **Conservation Holiday Drop-In Update:** Epps reported that all arrangements for catering were complete and they will be sending out invitations by end of month.
- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan Update:** Grego reported Council members English and Newton made a motion to have LRTP presented at a Council meeting but the format is not final.

- **Annual Plan for County Council:** Epps distributed the FY21-22 Annual Plan to Council and Administration and will send the final version to Commission so they will be prepared to discuss with Council members.
- **Land Development Code Update:** Grego reported he presented Commission thoughts to Council on November 9, 2021. There were concerns by the development community about the lengthy moratorium until maps were finalized but it was being resolved. Some are concerned about losing the flexibility of the Rural Zoning Designation that is potentially being replaced. The final reading will be at the Council session tomorrow and when the code is adopted along with the zoning map, discussion could be fierce in the rural areas. It will mean a lot whether a community gets an AG or HM designation and we will see if the Open Space or Water Resources overlays are applied generously. There will be a chance to re-engage on the code at that point and it will be interesting to see the draft zoning map and be thinking about whether we should be applying overlays to other zones.
- **Transportation Penny Greenways Update:** Grego stated that the Boyd family is donating \$3.6 million to build a connector bridge from Saluda Riverwalk across the Broad River to the Columbia Canal Riverfront Park Trail and they asked Richland County to give \$2.2 million from Penny Tax Greenway funds. There was concern that some of that money was for Gills Creek Greenway to be fully extended. It appears that it will come from bikeways funds (\$3.8 million) and the remaining could go to Gills Creek. Prisma Health is adding \$2 million. The approximate bridge location was demonstrated on a map. (Upstream of I-126 bridge). Grego discussed his conversation with Gills Creek about the width of Greenway. 10 ft was recommended by Richland County Engineering to City of Columbia. Some people are worried about too big of a boardwalk through the floodplain.

Conservation Manager's Report

- **Columbia Rowing Club:** CRC representative Ryan Smoker showed a Google map of the site and explained CRC use and explained access sharing from the golf center that will end Jan 1, 2022. He showed images of old docks (lost to flooding) and explained the new design that is removable prior to predicted flooding. He explained their study process and decision. He stated that jon boats are also used by the USC club and the youth program. He explained that DHEC had approved a similar dock design in 2015. Grego stated that previous leases/agreements were not complex but a new one would need to be agreed on, approved by legal, then by RCCC, then by Council. Weber stated that CRC needed to make sure DHEC approves of the new design. Epps added that the agreement should clarify dock ownership and terms. The County used to own and maintain all but the boats but now CRC wants to change the lease for CRC to be responsible for maintenance of the property. Legal gave their approval a month ago, so now we must get it on paper in the new lease/agreement. McSwain stated we need to mark up the old lease/agreement to meet the new terms. Grego said the Conservation Committee will rewrite with his and Quinton's help.

Treasurer's Report

- **Budget:** Weber stated the salaries of new hires will affect budget and Epps added that new computers and furniture will affect the budget also.

Conservation Committee Report

- ⇒ **McSwain moved to go into executive session which is seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

Grego stated no actions were taken during executive session.

- ⇒ **Weber moved for RCCC to proceed with purchase of Cabin Branch tract (60.1 acres at \$305,000 appraised value) which is seconded by McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.**
- ⇒ **Weber moved that RCCC prepares paperwork for transmittal to County Council for the purchase of this property which is seconded by Rodriquez. Motion passed unanimously.**

Historic Committee Report

Pearson suggested the Historic Committee make a plan to market Richland County history resources in time to piggyback with the opening of International African American Museum in Charleston. She wants to put together a committee with Commission members and other interested people. She will put together a future Zoom meeting.

- ⇒ **Pearson moved to extend the meeting by 15 minutes which was seconded by McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.**
- ⇒ **Weber moved to create a development committee to prepare a proposal which was seconded by DePaoli. Motion passed unanimously.**

Conservation Manager's Report

New Staff: Epps introduced new Land Program Planner, Walker McDonald, who shared his background and experience. Grego encouraged Walker to visit Mill Creek while it is dry. Epps added the new Conservation Program Analyst, John McKenzie, starts next week. He is still working on Administrative Assistant positions.

Advocacy Plan: Epps stated five Commissioners have responded and he hoped more would read and respond. Commissioners, not staff, can advocate for budget and programs to Council and the Holiday Drop-In is an opportunity for this.

New Business

Grego asked for new business or input. There was none.

- ⇒ **At 5:03 pm, Weber moved to adjourn the meeting which is seconded by McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
John McKenzie