



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

**Minutes
 May 17, 2021**

Attendance

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

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Chanda Cooper	Conservation Division
Annette House	Building Inspections Division
Meghan Sullivan	Planning Services Division

Call to Order

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:33 pm. All members, staff, and guests participated by Zoom video conference due to the closure of County offices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approval of Agenda

⇒ Squirewell moved to approve the agenda which was seconded by Holland. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of March 2021 Meeting, April Special Called and April RCCC Meeting Minutes

Grego stated that he and Atkins had looked over the March 2021 meeting minutes; Grego stated he had made strictly grammatical corrections to them. The two meetings in April were recently released and Grego stated he would like to make some grammatical edits to them.

⇒ Weber moved to approve March 2021 meeting minutes with Grego’s edits which was seconded by McSwain. There was much discussion about keeping up-to-date with the minutes so that Commission members can have time to review the minutes before the next meeting. The motion passed with an abstention from Atkins.

⇒ Weber moved to defer the two April meeting minutes which was seconded by McSwain. The motion passed unanimously.

Report of the Chair

- FY22 Administrator recommended budget – update

Grego stated he sent an email to our list of supporters encouraging them to submit public comments which was a follow up on what the Richland Soil & Water Conservation District had done. Grego received some responses back from that and shared those comments with the Council members. Grego indicated that Pearson had mentioned several years ago that we should have a friends group and this email list was a step in the direction of a friends group. Grego stated that he had shared his comments with Council at the Council Budget Work Session on May 13, 2021 and had not received any questions from Council members.

Holland said he had spoken with 3 members of the Legislative Delegation including Jermaine Johnson, who is new. Johnson indicated he knows all of the Council members, they talked about the tourism project in the Lower Richland area and said he would make contact with the Council members.

Pearson indicated she had been reaching out to quite a few people in the community and asked Grego if he had a total number of people who have sent in public comments. Grego indicated he was going to get in contact with Michelle Onley for a total.

Atkins stated he had submitted a letter for public comments which he believed would amount to a legal argument to bring the discussion back to reality.

Kososki commented she attended the unveiling of the historical marker at the Women's Club which occurred on Friday of last week; there were several people politically active in attendance at the meeting including Seth Rose. At the end of the meeting she was able to speak with Seth and he agreed to make contact with the general assembly members who could be helpful.

Rodriguez commented she had conversations with her Council woman early on in the process. She stated she had focused her comments on the Fund Balance since Council member Newton seemed focused on that.

Atkins commented from his letter that the fund balance is the fund balance per our ordinance and it does not matter whether the fund balance is derived from the millage money or from the general transfer in for the three properties in Lower Richland, it is the fund balance. However, Council can amend our ordinance and allow the fund balance to be used for other things; in this case, district salaries and personnel costs via the budget ordinance. Council can do what they want to do, but it would be bad form and a very bad precedent to use our fund balance for district salary. They need to be funded through general fund. There is a logical argument to be made and will be made that we should be able to use our fund balance for our purposes.

Weber asked if there's a transfer in to RCCC and we don't spend it all those funds are captured in our fund balance. Atkins replied that is true, whether it is millage money or general fund transfer in for those properties.

Atkins explained that finance has differentiated where the transfer in came from either general fund or millage. They are trying to justify through a budget amendment to our ordinance that general funds transferred in to our Special Revenue fund can be used for other items rather than RCCC activities and projects.

Kososki commented from her understanding that the savings from the district salaries were not in fact transferred in to our fund balance. Atkins replied no, just the transfer in for the three properties. Any unused portion of funds from the district salaries would go back to the general fund.

Atkins commented that Kenny and I were told by the Assistant County Administrator Lori Thomas (for Finance) that if it was up to her she would automatically take the general fund, fund balance out of our Special Revenue fund balance and put it back in the general fund balance and end the practice of putting it in our fund balance.

McSwain commented he had nothing new, he had copied everybody on the public comments, and also copied Derrick Pugh on all of them so he could see what he had sent in.

Squirewell made several comments which could not be clearly heard. Grego stated that Council member Barron had asked some very pointed questions in the meetings he had attended.

Grego asked Epps to confirm the calendar for the public hearing FY22 budget proposal. Epps stated the Public Hearing for the FY22 recommended budget was scheduled for May 20th at 6 pm. Grego stated that several people had commented to him that information about the Public Hearing was not available on the county website and this was upsetting.

Epps stated the 2nd reading of the budget on May 27th at 6pm.

Kososki asked how she could view the meeting. Epps stated should all be on the You Tube channel similar to all the other Richland County Council meetings.

Atkins stated there is a place on the You Tube channel, if you do want to speak, you can type into the chat box and these comments will be incorporated into the record.

Pearson expressed appreciation for all the work everyone had put into this process as she has learned a lot about the Commission during this process which was very useful to her.

Grego also expressed appreciation for all the work provided by Commissioners. In particular, Atkins and Kososki, who have been absolutely dogged in the terms of work they have put into this effort.

- Land Development Code (LDC) – update

Grego stated they have released a new version of the draft code. There is a map workshop scheduled for Thursday at 4 pm for a sneak peep at the zoning map.

Kososki asked if Epps could email the web link to the LDC draft for Commissioners.

Grego stated the Planning Commission will meet on June 7th to discuss the LDC and it will go to Council for 1st reading on June 27th. Additional comments should be submitted to Brian Crooks and Tommy DeLage by June 18th. They will be presented as public comments during the Zoning Public Hearing.

Grego explained various items from the draft LDC and said various items we have requested appear to have been included.

Kososki asked if there were tree protection recommendations from us given the proposed changes in the State House regarding local tree protection rules. A discussion followed regarding tree sizes and various ordinance protections.

Treasurer's Report

Epps reported that there were no major changes to the current budget except he had requested a budget transfer of \$31,000 from Acquisitions to Professional Services so there would be enough money to cover the \$250,000 design cost for the bridge replacement project.

Atkins pointed out that there will funds going into our fund balance at the end of the year because we have not spent the funds because the Land Program Planner position has been vacant.

Grego pointed out we are going to spend \$250,000 on the bridge replacement design and this is why we have been saving our fund balance to provide funds for these types of large projects.

Epps stated that if anyone had questions about the budget to please call him offline and he could answer any questions regarding the budget.

Report of the Community Planning & Development Director

Epps stated Clayton Voignier informed him he was not going to make the meeting, no information was given about the vacant positions, and they are still not posted the last time he checked. Commissioners wanted to know the status as to when the vacant positions would be posted and had general questions about what the Total Rewards Program was for staff. Epps explained the Total Rewards Program to the commissioners and that the answers to the vacancies have been provided by Voignier in previous meetings and likely have not changed.

Carol asked who had the ball on getting the positions clarified and posted and Epps responded Director Voignier.

Grego stated we would decide offline who would ask Voignier about the vacant positions.

There was much discussion regarding the Total Rewards Program.

Conservation Committee Report

- Cabin Branch Tract- action item

Atkins reported he emailed the conservation committee and informed them that he wanted to add this to the agenda. The 60-acre cabin branch parcel is under development threat. There have been several offers made on that property; all of them were to cut the 30 acres of forested wetland, which would really be a negative impact since this is adjacent to our cabin branch properties. He believes there is movement by the owner to come down to a reasonable price; so the first thing to get done is to get an appraisal. Then the committee can make a decision and vote on if they want to purchase the property to protect it.

⇒ **Atkins moved to have an appraisal done on the parcel which was seconded by Weber.**

⇒ **McSwain requested an amendment to the motion to include an appraisal on the last lot of the cul-de-sac which was seconded by Atkins.**

Grego stated this is just another demonstration of how we spend our fund balance and our Professional Services budget. There was much discussion regarding the appraisal, property costs, and how the Special Revenue Fund Balance could be spent.

⇒ **Atkins called for the question and the motion passed unanimously.**

Historic Committee Report

- Historical markers - update

Holland stated he wasn't in attendance and asked Kososki to report. Kososki stated it was very successful, well received, a lovely marker, with Weber, Atkins, Stone-Collum and others in attendance, and it's located at Blossom and Henderson Street in the Columbia's high traffic historic area.

Conservation Manager's Report

- Pollinator Garden update

Epps stated Robert Reese is maintaining the garden; all is well and will try to get Reese in the meeting along with some pictures and discussion about the garden. Atkins asked if the grants were over and done. Cooper replied yes; Anne Marie's last day was April 17th, all the grant funds have been used and the final report will go in by June 30th.

- Mill Creek Bridge repair update

Epps stated the Mill Creek bridge repair will go to committee next week; then to Council in June and hopefully get approved, so the FY21 funds can be used for that project.

- RCCC grants - update

There are 15 total grants for FY21, 5 are completed, 10 are not completed, and they are in various stages. There are 3 FY20 grants that were rolled over, 1 of those has been completed and 2 will not be completed. Epps stated we have asked for one of those (which is the SERCO grant) to be rolled over for next year. The Progressive Network grant which is similar as they applied for funding for FY22 and were recommended by the Commission to be funded and hopefully it will be approved by Council.

- Walden Pond Feasibility Study update

Epps stated we discussed at one of the Commission meetings that the only modification needed to finalize the Walden Pond Study was for the consultant to put the cost estimate inside the report and if there are no other comments it is ready to be closed out. He also stated the next steps would be to discuss the study with the Walden Pond HOA.

New Business

Pearson expressed her concerns on commissioners being consistent in attending the different events in different areas of the county.

Adjournment

⇒ Weber moved to adjourn which was seconded by Squirewell. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette House.