



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

Minutes May 16, 2016

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Becky Bailey, Jim Thomas, Charles Weber, Sam Holland, and Margaret DuBard

Absent: Ann Furr, Glenice Pearson, Virginia Sanders, and Jennifer Carter

Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Department
Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Department
Charlie Fisher, Conservation Department
Ken Driggers, Contract Legal Counsel
Janelle Ellis, Sustainability Office
Pat Beekman, Ass't. Local Disaster Recovery Manager, Tetra Tech
Warren Harley, Assistant County Administrator
Jim Manning, Richland County Councilmember

Chair, Carol Kososki welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order without a quorum at 3:35pm

Councilman Jim Manning explained he was asked by staff to address Council's recent action regarding Palmetto Utilities. [RCCC received information at the April meeting that Council would take up a request from Palmetto Utilities on the following day to discharge additional wastewater into Spears Creek in Kershaw, not Richland County as originally proposed, which Council approved.] Mr. Manning expressed his opinion that this was Cook's Mountain all over again, meaning Council was being asked by RCCC to circumvent environmental control issues regulated by the state. He said RCCC would have been more effective in commenting to Council by addressing the issue of customer rate paying instead of environmental concerns which are regulated by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC).

Charles Weber said he felt RCCC advice was taken lightly. Mr. Manning replied Council can't do everything the many boards and commissions ask or recommend and does listen to RCCC on many issues. Carol pointed out the short timeframe to give comments to Council and asked if a regional concept is being worked on since wastewater discharges affect numerous governmental entities. Warren Harley said he was not aware of any regional discussion; Palmetto Utilities, Richland County and Kershaw are working on a plan for Spears Creek which has not been approved by Kershaw County yet. Charles relayed that rates were increased in the northwest part of the county when faced with a similar situation and the northeast should have done likewise. Carol requested Administration notify RCCC when Kershaw County makes a decision.

A quorum was reached with the arrival of Sam Holland and Becky Bailey.

Approval of Agenda: The suggestion was made to exchange agenda items 4 & 5 to allow Mr. Beekman to proceed with his presentation. Charles made a motion to approve the modified agenda and was seconded by Becky Bailey. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes: John Grego moved and Charles seconded the motion to approve the minutes from March 21, 2016 as presented. Motion carried. Since there was no quorum at the April meeting there are no official minutes; notes from April 18 were provided.

Flood Mitigation Alternatives Assessment

Mr. Beekman explained County Council hired Tetra Tech to provide technical assistance with a flood mitigation alternatives assessment. The study collected high water marks, reviewed existing management plans and damage assessment data, held public meetings, performed technical assessments, developed mitigation recommendations, and also developed detailed cost options for three areas – Gills Creek Watershed, Lower Richland County, and Stoop Creek Watershed. Recommendations for Gills Creek: affirm projects recommended in existing studies and buy out 46 properties. Recommendations for Lower Richland: affirm projects recommended in existing studies, buy out 17 properties, replace nine culverts, and modify or enhance five stormwater conveyances. Two detention basins are recommended for Stoop Creek.

Quinton mentioned it was his recommendation for Council to visit Nashville to learn from their flood experiences. One critical lesson from Council's trip was to establish the criteria for buyouts first, which Richland County has done. Mr. Beekman pointed out all of the recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Committee have been accepted by Council and the Commission's input through Carol and Quinton has impacted many of those decisions.

Overall 17 projects totaling \$10.5 million were approved to move into the into the full application phase from the \$36 million the entire state may receive from FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds. Full applications are due by September 5 and will be ranked and then submitted to FEMA for review and approval by October 5th. This includes 14 county projects and three private projects to armor dams at Spring Lake, Cary Lake, and Lake Dogwood. The county will receive a direct allocation of \$23.5 million in Community Development Block Grants-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds. The Blue Ribbon Committee and Council approved rolling over all HMGP projects that were submitted or didn't get approved for full allocation to the list for CDBG-DR funding. Once the Federal Register is released with the criteria for spending the funds, the County has 90 days to develop an action plan. The plan provides for broad categories of spending; Council will decide which projects fall under the categories. John requested a presentation on CDBG-DR once the criteria are clear.

Conservation Committee Report

John referred everyone to their copy of the map detailing the Rice Creek 161-acre parcel discussed at a previous meeting. The owner intends to retain ~35 acres to sell for development. The property is composed of steep slopes, wetlands, longleaf pine and has a lot of recreational value. John made a motion to accept the property donation and was seconded by Jim Thomas. Motion carried unanimously.

Wateree River Heritage Preserve Comments

Nancy explained the Management Plan lacked specification and focused too much on hunting. She highlighted issues in mitigation, education, recreation, hunting, public input, and archaeology in a handout. Commission members are asked to review the comment points and respond by May 24 with additional suggestions or issues. The comments are due to the Department of Natural Resources by May 27.

Conservation Directors’ Report

Spears Creek/Palmetto Utilities

Quinton will write a letter to the Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) requesting a multi-jurisdictional approach to the Spears Creek concern. Currently there is no meeting scheduled with CMCOG and input into the regulatory system at DHEC will be limited so there is no rush for the letter to be written. Warren will be brought up to date on what is happening with this matter.

Lower Richland Concept Plan

Four proposals were received and three consultant groups will make presentations to the five evaluators, which include Glenice Pearson, John, and Nancy.

Mill Creek tracts

The permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been issued and Ken Driggers and Quinton are working on the conservation easement which should be signed in the near future. Credits are expected to be released soon. The Upper Tract purchase approval will go to Council’s committee meeting May 24.

Owens Field

We are waiting for approval of the intergovernmental agreement from the Legal Department so county funds can be transferred to the city and work can begin.

Conservation Coordinator’s Report

Slave Dwelling Conference

Nancy reported she is involved in conference calls to evaluate presentations for the concurrent sessions. Dr. Bobby Donaldson is being considered as one of the key-note speakers. County Council still needs to approve this and all of the FY17 grants.

Greenways

The Vista Greenway is expected to be finished in June. Penny staff have been meeting with homeowner associations on the west side of Gills Creek to determine their acceptance of a greenway. A legal agreement is necessary with the city to do maintenance and provide police protection.

Grants

Nancy is working with grant recipients to have projects completed by the deadline of June 30. May 26 was discussed as a possible date to tour the Dutch Fork Middle School and Heathwood Hall projects.

Nancy attended the SE Regional Land Trust Conference in Birmingham, Alabama last week. The conference was excellent. A tour of Red Mountain Park, a 1500-acre preserve created and protected by US Steel and the local land trust is a source of good ideas that could be incorporated into the plan for Lower Richland.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant