



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

Minutes November 30, 2015

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Jim Thomas, Charles Weber, Ann Furr, Glenice Pearson, Virginia Sanders and Sam Holland

Absent: Margaret DuBard, Jennifer Carter, and Becky Bailey

Others present:

Quinton Epps, Conservation Department
Nancy Stone-Collum, Conservation Department
Charlie Fisher, Conservation Department
Ken Driggers, Contract Legal Counsel
Mike King, Assistant Director Richland Emergency Department
Jonathan Burgiel, Tetra Tech

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

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

Approval of Minutes from October 25: Ann moved to approve the minutes with the correction of Jennifer Myers' name changed to Carter and was seconded by John. Motion carried.

Report of the Chair

Carol reported she and Quinton attended Council's Disaster Recovery work session on Nov. 23 which was largely educational. Council appeared to be amenable with staff's recovery strategies/recommendations (see handout from October meeting) but deferred all action until the Dec. 1 Council meeting. Quinton will likely serve on the staff working group and RCCC should be represented on the blue ribbon committee.

2015 Flood and Dam Failure Updates

Mike King, Assistant Director for the county's Emergency Services Department, reported the 1000-year rain event, better described as a one in one thousand chance (.1%) of happening in any given year, caused 20 dam failures, 16 of which are regulated by DHEC. Tetra Tech has been hired by the County to provide technical assistance with issues such as well contamination and high water marks and to recoup as many storm-related expenses from FEMA as possible.

So far FEMA has reimbursed 14 million dollars to SC households. There is a large void between what FEMA provides (maximum of \$33,000 per household) and the needs. Challenges ahead include working with state and federal government, volunteer, and charitable organizations. The goal is to build back better and more resiliently to meet future stresses.

A meeting is scheduled with the state Emergency Management Office Thursday to discuss the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program which provides grants to state and local governments after a presidential disaster declaration. Hazard mitigation projects are funded on a 75% federal, 25% non-federal cost share basis. This program provides funds for voluntary buyouts of property that have repetitive flooding issues. A willing landowner is paid the fair market value prior to the flood, the structure is razed, and the land is permanently kept as green space. The State gets 15% of the total disaster spending which can be used for buyout grants. Determining eligibility and finding a local sponsor for the program are the first steps.

Glenice Pearson and Carol were concerned over the quality of the information and the way it was dispersed by the news media during the early days of the flood. Mr. King said the county's Public Information Officers vetted all information released but they obviously had no control over the coverage. A top-to-bottom operational review of how all aspects of the flood response were handled will be undertaken. Charles Weber suggested writing letters of complaint to the TV stations for inclusion in their FCC review.

Charles asked about maintaining green spaces created from buy-outs. Mr. King replied it would be a county responsibility but in Houston, the city granted 99-year leases to adjacent landowners to maintain the green space with the condition no structures could be erected. Virginia Sanders asked if the FEMA flood maps would be revised as a result of the flood. Mr. King said no, not as a direct result but revisions are always underway. New preliminary maps have been issued and may be appealed; meanwhile the county is still working from 2010 maps.

The long-term recovery plan consists of six steps: 1) organization – Blue Ribbon Advisory committee and county work group; 2) inventory of critical needs and assets; 3) risk assessment of assets and facilities; 4) project identification; 5) prioritization of projects and development of funding strategies; and 6) complete draft and final plans. The public will be engaged throughout all steps; the goal for completion of the plan is 60 – 90 days. Mr. King said that experience has shown for each day an area is under disaster designation, it takes a year to recover. Richland County was under the disaster designation for eleven days.

Jonathan Burgiel with Tetra Tech was asked about the well contamination work they are conducting. He replied that 304 wells were contaminated with fecal coliform/E. Coli out of the 758 samples submitted. The wells are widely distributed across the county but more are found in Lower Richland. 100 have been disinfected. Tetra Tech has had difficulty getting in touch with many of the homeowners with contaminated wells despite phone calls and certified letters. The company has also been collecting high water marks in three prioritized areas: Gills Creek and Stoop Creek watersheds and Lower Richland. Five public outreach meetings will be held the second week of January in these three areas. Glenice requested they schedule more for Lower Richland because of the size of the area and the distinct communities.

Due to the lateness of the hour, Charles made a motion to move ahead to the Action items in the agenda. Jim seconded the motion and all approved.

Grant Funding Policy

Earlier in the year, commission members had discussed a desire to change the grant funding policy to limit the frequency of repeat applicants. Nancy sent an email based on Glenice and Margaret DuBard's recommendation to limit funding for the same project to two consecutive years. Organizations could apply every year but would have to bring new projects to the table. Ann didn't see why we would want to limit the applicants and pointed out there may be a great project we would want to fund more than two years. John made a motion to limit funding for the same project to two consecutive years. Jim seconded the motion which passed on a vote of 7 – 1.

Executive Session

John made a motion to move into executive session to discuss property acquisition. Ann seconded the motion which passed.

John moved to come out of executive session and was seconded by Virginia Sanders. Motion passed. No action was taken in executive session.

Pebble Creek Easement

A landowner in the Pebble Creek watershed has requested a conservation easement on his property. A plan was approved by Council in 2009 to accept donated easements protecting Pebble Creek in the northwest part of the county. Although this is a small residential tract of 5.69 acres, it is adjacent to two easements and does provide water quality protection for the creek and wildlife habitat. Charles moved to accept the donation of the conservation easement property. Ann seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Upcoming Events

Commissioners were reminded of the Holiday Drop-in on Tuesday, December 8 from 4:30-6:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm.

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant