



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

**Minutes**  
**December 15, 2021**

**Attendance**

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

Staff & Visitors	Affiliation
Quinton Epps	Conservation Division
Walker McDonald	Conservation Division
John McKenzie	Conservation Division
Geo Price	Planning Department
Brian Crooks	Planning Department
Dr. Kirstin Dow	UofSC Geography

**Call to Order**

Grego welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 3:35 pm. All members, staff, and guests participated by Zoom video conference.

**Approval of Agenda**

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

**Approval of Minutes**

⇒ **DePaoli moved to approve the amended minutes of the November 15, 2021 meeting and was seconded by Weber. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Report of the Chair**

- **Urban Heat Island/Heat Mapping Project – Dr. Kirstin Dow (USC Geography):** Dr. Dow was part of a Charleston County study. It is a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-led, multi-agency effort. She will work with the City of Columbia Tree & Appearance Commission with support of Planning and Public Works. The company involved provides heat sensors that attach to car windows and 25-30 volunteers drive transects through the city 3 times a day. Data is used for mapping that indicates “heat islands” and confirms that communities with well-preserved tree canopies have

lower temperatures. Dr. Dow showed maps of Columbia that compared heat in 2005 vs 2020 and a map that indicated a 21% loss in canopy over that time. She went on to talk about the negative effects on health and productivity in the South. Finally, Dr. Dow explained the opportunities to address this threat. The Infrastructure Investment Act supports tree planting in urban areas and the Healthy Streets Program supports projects that mitigate urban heat island, improve air quality, and reduce stormwater runoff. She requests a letter of support from RCCC for the grant proposal. The data will be shared so that the County can apply it to planning in high-risk areas. Weber asked Dr. Dow if she was aware of a canopy study for Northwest Richland County. Epps updated the study was GIS-based and looked at existing tree canopy layers to see where we might want to plant more trees. Epps stated that it was related but not the same study as proposed by Dr. Dow.

⇒ **DePaoli moved to approve a letter of support for Dr. Dow's NOAA grant proposal from RCCC and was seconded by Weber. Motion passed unanimously.**

- **Holiday Drop-In Update:** Grego reported that it was well attended by Commissioners and Council members and that they spent a good bit of time talking with Commissioners and staff.
- **Lower Richland Tourism Plan Update:** Grego reported that we prepared and he delivered a 10-minute presentation to the Development and Services Committee on Thursday, December 16. A motion passed to conduct a Council workshop and staff will be putting this together. Council member Barron was concerned with costs and what it would commit the County to. Grego restated that the LRTP is a plan and not all recommendations will be implemented. A list of steps already taken was presented. Some are small and low cost. Once Council adopts the plan we present it to the Planning Commission to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan and then Council will approve that.
- **Annual Plan for County Council:** Epps is preparing the FY22-23 Annual Plan but we still need to hear about the budget schedule to time our submittal. It will need to be presented to Council.
- **Commissioner Advocacy Plan:** Grego stated that we will have a meeting to develop the plan. He reviewed some responses to the questionnaire and how good relations with our community supporters was a strength and lack of relationships and understanding from Council and Administration of RCCC activities was a weakness.
- **Sustainable Communities Update:** Grego explained it was a set of webinars put together by the National Park Service, National Park Foundation, US Forest Service and Congaree National Park and invited the community to join. After the first webinar, CNP Superintendent invited us to be a part of grants. The plan we were working on represents an effort by Dezmond Sumter of Mt. Moriah Baptist Church to create a sculpture park. They discussed possible locations and Greenway connections to CNP. Robert Reese and Reverend Sumter have been talking with Sen. Jackson about the project and a concept plan is probably the first step. Epps added that although not part of the LRTP, these types of projects that keep people in Lower Richland are desirable.
- **Land Development Code Update:** Crooks reported they were working to finalize the draft zoning maps and will have them available for public view for the new year. The new maps and text should be ready for target date of May 2, 2022. As far as AG or HM designation, one of the main principles we are trying to utilize is trying to reduce non-conforming uses as much as possible unless targeted.

## **Treasurer's Report**

- **Budget:** Squirewell reported that we are on track with the budget. Epps agreed.

### **Conservation Committee Report**

- **Cabin Branch Purchase:** Epps reported the purchase was approved by the Commission and then approved by the D&S Committee last week. It will now go to the next Council meeting, likely in February, and will hopefully be approved there.
  - **Columbia Rowing Club agreement:** Weber reported that the agreement was complete and approved by the CRC.
- ⇒ **Weber moved to have the RCCC approve the agreement with CRC, pending amendments from the Legal Department, which is seconded by Grego. Motion passed unanimously.**
- ⇒ **Weber moved to have the agreement passed on to Administration and have them approve and pass it on to Council for final approval which was seconded by Squirewell. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **Historic Committee Report**

- **Heritage Tourism Marketing Plan - Request for Proposal (RFP):** Pearson requested that Epps update the progress on the RFP. Epps reported that the draft RFP writing had begun and suggested the Hospitality tax funds could be used for a historic project. We need a proposal to hire a marketing firm to evaluate existing Richland County history resources and put together a recommendation in time to piggyback with the opening of International African American Museum in Charleston and draw visitors to Richland County. McKenzie stated that the projected opening date from the IAAM is late Fall 2022. Pearson added that she has included Rep. Jermaine Johnson to be involved and that he will contact Sen. Jackson about State funds and that he was excited and committed to the project. Pearson stated that she intends to move ahead with the creation of a non-profit to assist with funding for sites and would like to hear from anyone who wants to help with a mission statement and plan. Pearson added that there will be a group of initial incorporators and paperwork and fees to work out and she explained that it would resemble Historic Columbia in its relationship with the County. She also encouraged thought and suggestions of a potential leader for this organization.

### **Conservation Manager's Report**

- **New Conservation Program Analyst hired:** Epps introduced John McKenzie. McKenzie gave his background as an environmental educator and land manager with city, state and private entities and a degree in history.
- **Mitigation Credit Sales:** Epps reported that sales are right at \$2 million total for all the sales in the bank. \$184,000 were sold in December with an additional \$55,200 underway today. Weber asked for remaining balance of credits. Epps reported 23,234.28 Stream credits and 658.13 Wetland credits. Recent sales were from Lexington and Sumter counties because they do not have their own mitigation bank. Weber stressed that our Council members need to be reminded that this investment in the County is paying off.

### **New Business**

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

⇒ **At 4:40 pm, Weber moved to adjourn the meeting which is seconded by Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,  
John McKenzie