



***Richland Soil and Water Conservation District***

**2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A**

**Columbia, SC 29204**

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September 14, 2020

Virtual Meeting/6:00pm

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners

Mary Hendrix

James Kilgo

Others Present

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager

Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator

Mary Hannah Lindsay, RSWCD Education Program Assistant

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant

Anne Marie Johnson, Pollinator Garden Manager

Tyler Brown, SC DNR Program Manager

Hemphill Pride advised Chairman Mullis he was unable to attend.

Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Mullis called the meeting to order and Commissioner Laney gave the invocation.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Mullis explained Commissioners would need to go into Executive Session after New Business to discuss an employee contractual matter. Commissioner Burts made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Laney. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Burts reported a typo in the August 10 meeting minutes to correct, Chairman instead of Charmin. Commissioner Laney made a motion to approve the amended minutes. Commissioner Burts seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### Affiliate Membership

No new Affiliates to report. Commissioner Laney explained renewal notices were sent to Affiliates with the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District's (RSWCD) Annual Report.

### Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report

Ms. Johnson reported she was delighted with the interest and questions from the recent tour attendees from the Richland County Conservation Commission and RSWCD. The garden is now transitioning from summer to fall with lots of butterflies including Monarchs and Gulf fritillaries. The tools have now been purchased and the first garden volunteer, Carol Kososki, came out this morning to work and did an amazing job deadheading Salvia. Work is underway to prepare the beds for the fall vegetable crops.

### Conservation Manager's Report/Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) Update

Mr. Epps explained RCCC did not meet in August so not much has changed. Work is continuing on the Land Development Code comments. Potential easement and land donations are under consideration. Budget cuts have been implemented and more may be initiated by County Council and staff is trying to determine their impact on programs.

### Education Report

Ms. Lindsay reported staff has been busy with the Seed Sanctuary program mailing out the fall selections which include broccoli, beets, cauliflower, carrots, and radishes. Three hundred requests have been filled so far and an additional three hundred will be filled by the end of the week. Several people found the RSWCD volunteer form and volunteered even though RSWCD has not yet advertised for help. Ms. Lindsay plans to start filling seed packets for the spring mail out. The August Plant of the Month featured on the RSWCD website is the Black-eyed Susan. Work is underway to catalog the plants at the Pollinator Garden and list them on RSWCD's website so people visiting the garden will be able to access information regarding the plants. Instagram followers continue to increase. The Seed Sanctuary has helped to propel RSWCD's internet presence. Commissioner Mary Burts is featured in the summer RSWCD newsletter, detailing her life-long exposure and interest in environmental education. Tyler Brown from SCDNR thanked Ms. Cooper and Ms. Lindsay for their outstanding work on the Healthy Forests = Healthy Communities poster contest initiative. SCDNR is in the process of mailing out the first State Allocation payment of \$7,500 to the Districts who have completed their allocation request paperwork. The second payment of \$7,500 should be mailed out in January. Mr. Brown anticipates if the SCDNR budget remains conservative for FY-22 then the budget should remain stable. Ms. Cooper participated in the SC Conservation District Employee Training where she watched a new video promoting the Healthy Forests = Healthy Communities initiative, which will be available soon to stimulate participation in the poster contest. Several sponsors helped to make the video production possible. A poster contest brochure has also been created by Ms. Lindsay, detailing sponsors and background information about why forests are critical to providing clean air, water, healthy soil, and abundant wildlife habitat, all of which enhance our communities. Ms. Lindsay showed examples of several Instagram posts. Mini Grants have an option for two award cycles and will be due either September 30, 2020 or February 1, 2021. Last year's poster contest winners are being forwarded to the State Competition. Ms. Lindsay has just started her graduate program and is pursuing a Master of Earth & Environmental

Resource's Management degree. Ms. Lindsay was also accepted into the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification Program. Participants at today's SC Conservation District's Employees Training were told an in-person Envirothon is planned for April 2021. Training Trunks have been created to assist Teachers with team preparation. RSWCD co-hosted the Midlands Meetup which typically has 20-21 attendees. Ms. Cooper is heavily involved in the planning for the SE Regional Environmental Workshop, an eight state regional event complicated by the necessity of being a virtual meeting and is looking forward to the event which is next Thursday and Friday. One-hundred and fifteen people are registered for the virtual meeting. RSWCD also co-hosted the Midlands Local Food Collaborative meeting. A farmer/chef mashup event is planned for spring. Green Steps programming is picking up with private schools requesting outdoor socially distanced mentor meetings. Public schools remain virtual. Last week Ms. Cooper and Angela Vandelay recorded a conference presentation about the 25 Mile Creek Watershed project entitled "A Success Story" which will be presented at the SE Stormwater Association conference. There has been a substantial reduction of bacterial contamination in the watershed due to the initiative. The summer RSWCD newsletter created by Ms. Lindsay and edited by Ms. Cooper is being distributed. Since Pinewood Lake Park has been closed due to the pandemic, the Richland County Public Information Office working with Ms. Cooper has released four videos out of a planned 24 video series; more than 10,000 views have already occurred. Ms. Johnson has been a great source of ideas for the informative and fun videos. The videos are an outstanding educational outreach tool occurring during the pandemic. Jay Keck from SC Wildlife Federation recently toured the garden and talked about wildlife habitat and protecting pollinator habitat which in turn protects habitat for other wildlife. SC Wildlife Federation wrote a letter of support for the pollinator grant application. Richland and Calhoun SWCDs held a virtual joint Local Work Group meeting with 12 participants to identify resource concerns (cropland, pasture, forest and animal waste) for the upcoming federal funding year.

#### NRCS Report

No report was provided.

#### Financial Report

Deposits totaled \$1,020; checks and debits totaled \$4,230.43; ending balance is \$47,752.55 as of August 31. The bank statement is balanced with the checkbook.

#### **New Business**

##### Pollinator Demonstration Garden Project Continuation

One of the main components of the Urban Agriculture Conservation grant was to develop a team of community leaders who would become garden volunteers and take ownership/leadership of the pollinator demonstration garden in order to sustain the garden after the grant concludes. This has not happened since Pinewood Lake Park has been closed due to the pandemic and not open to the public. The grant will run out in February or early March and, unless there is a plan in place to continue to support garden maintenance and development, the garden may wither. Staff could pursue with RSWCD approval a second grant to continue funding for a garden manager to maintain the garden while recruiting and training a group of community volunteers (provided the Park is able to open to the public) that will

eventually transition into a position of leadership for the garden. Commissioners will need to provide a directive to pursue another grant which will then need to be approved by CP&D Director Clayton Voignier, Assistant County Administrator Ashley Powell, County Administrator Leonardo Brown and also Councilwoman Chakisse Newton since the Park is in her District. The position of the Land Program Planner could potentially have some role in the garden's future; however with the hiring freeze the position has not been filled. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to pursue another grant to fund the garden and was seconded by Commissioner Burts. Motion passed. Chairman Mullis indicated there was a good possibility NACD could view RSWCD in a favorable manner for a second grant.

#### Strategic Planning: Affiliate Membership Program

Based on the Doodle Poll, Commissioners are available to meet October 21 at 5:30pm to brainstorm ways to enhance the RSWCD's Affiliate Member program. An invitation with date and time will be sent out with a series of questions to prompt thought ahead of time. Does it make more sense to have membership with benefits or structure as a Friends or Supporter program? Who should we target and what strategy should be used to recruit and maintain them? Commissioner Laney said it is important to nail down what affiliate member donations are used for so Affiliates will understand the return on their investment. Mr. Epps suggested business could be encouraged to join (for advertising) due to the 10,000 views on the pollinator conservation videos.

#### Executive Session

Commissioner Laney made a motion seconded by Commissioner Burts to move into Executive Session to discuss an employee contractual issue.

No action was taken during Executive Session.

Mr. Brown explained Richland SWCD staff is making a huge impact with other Districts across the state and the efforts are appreciated. Chairman Mullis's involvement with Boards across the State is also influential and much appreciated.

Next Meeting - October 12, 2020 via zoom

Respectfully Submitted,

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Kenny Mullis, Chair

Charlie Fisher, Admin. Asst./CC