



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

Minutes February 27, 2012

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Glenice Pearson, Jim Lawracy, Becky Bailey, Gary Atkinson, Frank Houston, Margaret DuBard,

Absent: Virginia Sanders, Mildred Myers, Sam Holland

Others present:

James B. Atkins (Buddy), Environmental Planning Division
Nancy Stone-Collum, Environmental Planning Division

Chair Carol Kososki called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

Minutes: A motion was made by Jim Lawracy and seconded by Glenice Pearson to approve the minutes of January 23, 2012 as written. Motion carried

Agenda: A motion was made by Glenice Pearson and seconded by Gary Atkinson to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Report of the Chair

Development Roundtable

Carol Kososki reported on the recent Planning Commission Work Session held to review the recommendations of the Development Roundtable. For three years the Roundtable, consisting of developers, environmentalists (including Carol and John Grego), and county staff have worked to reach consensus on development principles developed by the Center for Watershed Protection. The principles agreed upon have been written into ordinances that the Planning Commission will vote to amend, accept, or reject before being sent to Council. The next Planning Commission meeting will be Tuesday, March 6 but they will probably schedule another work session to go through the ordinances individually.

Structure and budget

At the January Commission meeting, a letter to County Administrator Milton Pope was approved requesting a meeting, which has since been scheduled for March 6. Glenice Pearson and Carol Kososki will be joined by Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners Ken

Mullis and Mark Huguley to discuss with Mr. Pope how the Environmental Planning Division is organized and in particular the desirability of elevating the combined efforts of the Commission and the District. Increased staffing is needed as well as a direct line to the Administrator and County Council. Glenice expressed concern about the impact on volunteer Commissioners of having their work summarily dismissed by Administration and/or Council. This kind of disregard makes volunteers not want to serve and it becomes difficult to recruit good people who take the work seriously.

Environmental Division Manager's Report

Mitigation Bank

Buddy reported he and the Mitigation Banking Team (Milton Pope, Sparty Hammett, David Hoops Don Chamblee, Quinton Epps, and John Collum and Daniel Johnson from Tidewater Environmental) met with Hugh Palmer February 9. The meeting went well and a number of Mr. Palmer's concerns were addressed. State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan monies are available through DHEC for innovative green projects such as Jackson Creek Mitigation Bank. The deadline to turn in a letter of intent (Project Questionnaire) to apply is Thursday, March 1.

Buddy reviewed his mitigation bank briefing to Council at their January 26-27 retreat. He explained that had the County had a mitigation bank in place when the 601 Bridge project began, the County could have sold (an estimated) two million dollars in credits. Instead, the credits were purchased on Black Creek in Berkeley County. Buddy told Council it would take a three to five million dollar dedicated mitigation bank fund to start a county-wide mitigation bank program. Council responded favorably and directed Milton Pope to determine what steps need to take place to create a mitigation bank program.

The final report for the Mitigation Bank Assessment of the Gills Creek Watershed has been submitted by the Dennis Corporation. This was an FY 2011 grant to the Gills Creek Watershed Association that had been granted an extension. Of the thirteen sites reviewed, six were selected as high priority for restoration/enhancement. However, the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has not approved an umbrella bank to date; and each individual property to be included in an umbrella bank must meet the COE's requirements such as water quality monitoring.

Committee Reports

Conservation Committee

Conservation Easements

Nancy Stone-Collum presented two properties that have been previously talked about for approval for conservation easements. The 26-acre property at the entrance to Spring Valley subdivision is on Little Jackson Creek. Nancy, Buddy, and Ken walked the property last March. Stormwater Division has a project currently under design adjacent to the easement on Little Jackson Creek. There are several lots that could be developed but would not be under an easement. A dirt road running through the parcel provides a nice walking trail for members of the subdivision and adjacent neighborhoods. Nancy spoke to the Board of the Homeowners Association on February 23 to explain the impact of a conservation easement. John Grego

moved to approve the donated easement and Gary Atkinson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

The second property is seven tracts on Cedar Creek with 53 acres of wetlands. John and Nancy tried to explore the property but it was fairly impenetrable. Wetland species like juncus, wax myrtle, and red bay were abundant; no invasive species were evident. John moved to accept the donated easement and Jim Lawracy seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Revised Trail Grant

Town of Blythewood received a \$10,000 grant from the Commission for an additional mile of trail in their new park. However, due to the massive construction for the other components, a trail cannot be built at this time. The town has offered a substitute plan – use the funds to rehabilitate 1.6 miles of trail around Blythewood High School. These are trails that are available to the public after school hours, used by the cross country track team, and used for nature study by the elementary schools. Part of the trail will tie in with the larger Blythewood Trail and Greenway System. Buddy pointed out as a part of due diligence with regard to the recent years of drought, it will be necessary to understand what the maximum elevation of the spillway is in the pond so any future trail will not be impacted when the pond fills back up. John moved to approve the revised trail grant which was seconded by Jim. Motion carried unanimously.

The Conservation Committee agreed to meet on Friday, March 9 for question and answer sessions with grant applicants. Fifteen grants were received for a total of \$196,182; \$80,000 is available for distribution.

Historic Committee

Fifteen applications were also received for the Historic Preservation grant program for a total of \$342,639. Seven of these are new applicants. The committee agreed to meet on Monday, March 12 to hear presentations.

Nancy reminded members of the Historic Preservation Conference on March 29-30. She distributed a newspaper article about the Union Textile building discussed at last month's meeting.

Finance Committee

Buddy will meet with Milton Pope on March 7 to discuss the Commission budget and new staffing position requested.

Outreach Committee

Becky encouraged everyone to “like” the Commission on Facebook so that we will have more followers. Progress is being made on the design of the new website. Becky asked if RCCC members would be willing to serve on the Speaker's Bureau for RC Neighborhood Council. This would be a good way to spread the word about easements and grant programs.

Meeting Extension: Jim moved and Gary seconded the motion to extend the meeting for ten minutes. Motion carried.

Conservation Coordinator's Report

Nancy distributed a flyer for the Congaree River Blue Trail kayak trip on March 24. This is being funded through our grant to American Rivers.

New Business

Jim Lawracy reported he had visited Mr. Buie to view the flooding and siltation problems on his property on Spears Creek. Unfortunately there does not appear to be anything that the Commission can do to help him. Jim offered a paper written by his son in 2000 on water quality issues at Hughes Lake.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, March 26, 2012 at 4:00pm at the Richland County Administration Building

Submitted by
Charlie Fisher
Administrative Assistant