



Green Space Advisory Committee

Chair

MICHAEL McSHANE

Vice Chair

ALICE HOWARD

Committee Members

TOM DAVIS

LAUREL RHOTEN

CARMEN AVON MANNING

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Interim County Administrator

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Green Space Advisory Committee Agenda

Monday, August 14, 2023 at 2:00 PM

Executive Conference Room

County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, SC

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. FOIA – PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF THIS MEETING HAS BEEN PUBLISHED, POSTED, AND DISTRIBUTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE SOUTH CAROLINA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT
3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – AUGUST 4, 2023
5. DISCUSSION OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM LAND CONSERVATION GROUPS REGARDING THE DRAFT CONSERVATION EASEMENT APPLICATION TYPE
6. DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL APPLICATION TYPES
7. OTHER BUSINESS
8. ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

Green Space Advisory Committee

August 4, 2023, 10:00 AM, Executive Conference Room, Beaufort County Administration Building

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair McShane called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. Chair McShane stated that public notification of the meeting had been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Tom Davis
Timothy Evans
Alice Howard, Vice-Chair
T. Peter Kristian
Carmen Avon Manning
Michael McShane, Chair
Laurel Rhoten

STAFF PRESENT:

Chuck Atkinson, Assistant County Administrator, Development/Recreation
Mark Davis, Deputy Director, Beaufort County Planning and Zoning Department
Amanda Flake, Natural Resource Planner
Katie Herrera, Assistant Public Works Director-Environmental
Stefanie Nagid, Passive Park Manager

GUESTS PRESENT:

Grant McClure, South Coast Project Director, Coastal Conservation League; Caylor Romines, Director of Stewardship, Beaufort County Open Land Trust; Sasha Sypher, Intern, Coastal Conservation League; Anna Maria (Tab) Tabernick, District 6 County Council Member; and Kristen Williams, Executive Director, Beaufort County Open Land Trust.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Peter Kristian made a motion to approve the agenda for the meeting. Laurel Rhoten seconded. The vote to approve the agenda was unanimous.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 11, 2023:

Tim Evans made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 11 meeting. Peter Kristian seconded. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

Chair McShane recognized Interim County Administrator John Robinson. Mr. Robinson introduced himself. He thanked the Committee and stated he supports the program and thinks what the Green Space Advisory Committee is doing is great. He said the work will set an example for the state.

OVERVIEW OF PENNY SALES TAX COLLECTION AND HISTORICAL DATA BY QUARTER:

Hayes Williams, Beaufort County CFO, made a PowerPoint presentation based on historical data collections of the 2018 Local Option Sales Tax. He said collections are distributed quarterly. The 2018 Sales Tax collections averaged \$12.1 million/quarter. The Green Space Sales Tax collection to date (May and June) was \$5.4 million.

Chair McShane said the Committee could expect Green Space Sales Tax collections to yield \$12 to \$12.5 million/quarter.

Hayes Williams said he will provide quarterly reports on collections to the Advisory Committee. Payments are generally received 3-4 weeks after the quarter ends.

STAFF PRESENTATION OF AN APPLICATION FRAMEWORK THAT IMPLEMENTS A MEASURABLE SCORING SYSTEM GUIDED BY THE GREEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ADOPTED PROGRAM:

Chair McShane said today, the Committee will be reviewing a draft conservation easement application that will be used as template for the other application types. Chair McShane said he would like the committee to work through the document and adopt it by the end of the meeting. He said he would like to socialize the draft application with some applicant collaborators for their feedback.

Mark Davis reviewed the draft conservation easement application using the conference room computer screen. Mark said there will be different applications based on the different procurement types; however, there will be similarities between applications.

Discussion of “General Information” Section:

Mark said the General Information requested will not be used in the scoring but will be used to collect general/background information for applications. Mark stated the application is not in final format at this time but will be once all feedback is received.

Tim Evans suggested that the information requested be simplified with less wording.

Laurel Rhoten asked if a survey is required. Mark Davis said a survey is not required at the point of application. Chair McShane said a survey may be part of due diligence.

Vice-chair Howard asked that section asking about management of the conservation easement be shortened.

Regarding matches, Chair McShane said he wants to make sure that landowner's donated value is considered match.

Discussion of "Application Questions" Section:

Tim Evans suggested there be only one question per line to ensure a clear response.

Laurel Rhoten suggested a question be added to describe how the project has value to the program or to describe the costs vs benefits.

Carmen Manning asked who is scoring the application questions. Mark Davis said staff and the Advisory Committee will be evaluating the answers.

There was discussion about how applicants might respond to the questions.

Tim Evans said if a Phase I, due diligence, doesn't support the applicant's response to the questions, they probably won't move forward with the application.

Chair McShane said we need to remember that with easement applications, the applicant will generally be a qualified entity. He noted that with fee simple applications, these might come from the landowner and might require additional scrutiny.

Carmen Manning suggested we might want to have a question regarding the historical use of the property.

Tim Evans reminded the group that if the applicant is a land trust type of organization, they will have had to go through their board before they apply to the Green Space Program.

Chair McShane said often, qualified nonprofits negotiate with property owners to get great value.

Discussion of "Program Benefits and Associated Preservation Value" Section (Scoring System):

Chair McShane said there will be different scoring system for each application type.

In regard to Public Access and/or Public Benefit, Chair McShane noted that conservation easements may have public access. Peter Kristian noted that preventing or holding in check new public infrastructure and service costs, is a huge public benefit. Mark Davis said that is inherent value of the program as a whole. Peter Kristian said we don't want to lose sight of this.

After further discussion, Chair McShane asked for a motion to adopt the draft Conservation Easement Application, as reviewed and revised during the meeting, as a framework. Peter Kristian made that motion. Tim Evans seconded.

Chair McShane asked Chuck Atkinson if he wanted to discuss the scoring system. Chuck said there are differing opinions and options regarding the scoring. He said other entities use weighted averages under a 1-to-5-point scoring system. Under the 1 to 100 scoring system, what is the threshold to recommend a purchase?

Carmen Manning said the proposed 1 to 100 system is so fine-tuned it may get “ornery” when applied to numerous applications. Carmen said she had shared the scoresheet from Cuyahoga County that she thought worked well and she hoped the Committee had looked at it.

Mark Davis reminded the Committee there will be at least 6 different application types.

Senator Davis asked if there is going to be a disclaimer attached to the application scoring process.

Tim Evans said the statistician in him liked the weighted averages, but under either system, one application will end up with a higher score than another.

Peter Kristian said there is enough here to try it the way it is and if we find later on that it’s not working, then we need to go back and take another look at it. Chair McShane said that is where he is defaulting to as well; we’ll try this and see.

Mark Davis reminded the group that staff and the committee have the ability to amend the applications if they are not working as intended.

Chuck Atkinson said we are not comparing scores from project to project like you would with an RFP. What we are trying to do is quantify the desirability of the application on some scale.

Chair McShane said the scoring system is for our internal use; this is not what we’re asking Council to get deep into, and that’s not what they’re looking to do either.

Tim Evans said the scoring will reflect some weakness with the application and the applicant can address that.

Chair McShane asked if the motions to approve and second still stood. They did. There was no additional discussion.

Chair McShane asked for a vote on the motion. The vote to approve the Conservation Easement Application as a framework was unanimous.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mark Davis distributed a flyer regarding the Town of Yemassee Comprehensive Planning process. There will be a public meeting on August 8 to solicit input into the planning process.

Chair McShane asked if we could get the Department of Revenue (DOR) to review the program without having to wait until third reading by County Council. Chuck Atkinson said we can go to DOR after first reading but will hold third reading until we get DOR's response.

Carmen Manning said she would like to discuss the metrics of the program at an upcoming meeting. She asked what the Committee's annual report will look like; what will we report to the community.

Chair McShane asked Mark Davis to send the Conservation Easement Application to the Audubon Society, Open Land Trust, Open Space Institute, and The Nature Conservancy for their comments. He would like their comments by Friday, August 11.

The Green Space Program as adopted by the Green Space Advisory Committee will be presented to the Community Services and Land Use Committee on Monday, August 14 at 3:00 PM. Chair McShane asked the Advisory Committee members to attend.

The Advisory Committee will meet at 2:00 PM on Monday, August 14 before the Community Services and Land Use Committee meeting. They will consider any feedback on the conservation easement application that has been received from the nonprofit partners. The date of future meetings will be discussed on August 14.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 11:47 AM.

Minutes compiled by Libby Anderson, Beaufort County Planning and Zoning Department