



Green Space Advisory Committee

Chair

MICHAEL McSHANE

Vice Chair

LAWRENCE McELLYNN

Committee Members

TOM DAVIS

LAUREL RHOTEN

CARMEN AVON MANNING

TIMOTHY EVANS

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Green Space Advisory Committee Agenda

Friday, July 17, 2026 at 10:00 AM

Executive Conference Room

County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, SC

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. 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. REVIEW OF MINUTES

- A. ADOPTION OF THE JUNE 12, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- A. ELECTION OF CHAIR
- B. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

7. NEW APPLICATIONS

- A. **EXISTING PLANNED DEVELOPMENT BUYDOWN APPLICATION:** V&R INVESTMENT TRACT, BEAUFORT; POLITICAL JURISDICTION – TOWN OF PORT ROYAL; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – NORTHERN (*deferred from the June 12, 2026, GSAC meeting*)

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

PURSUANT TO S.C. CODE SECTION 30-4-70 (A) (2): DISCUSSION OF NEGOTIATIONS INCIDENT TO PROPOSED CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FOLLOWING GREEN SPACE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS:

- A. **FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION:** PINE GROVE PLANTATION TRACTS, SAINT HELENA ISLAND; POLITICAL JURISDICTION – UNINCORPORATED BEAUFORT COUNTY; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – EASTERN

9. MATTERS ARISING OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

10. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. PROJECT UPDATES

11. ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

Green Space Advisory Committee

June 12, 2026, 10:00 AM, Executive Conference Room, 100 Ribaut Road

CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair McElynn called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. Vice Chair McElynn confirmed with staff that public notification of the meeting was published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Tom Davis

Timothy Evans (virtual)

T. Peter Kristian

Carmen Avon Manning

Larry McElynn, Vice Chair

Laurel Rhoten

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael McShane, Chair

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Christina Bryant, Green Space Program Planner, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department

Mark Davis, Green Space Program Manager, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department

Amanda Flake, Natural Resource Planner, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department

Brian Hulbert, County Attorney

Dylan Kidd, Assistant County Administrator, Beaufort County

Rob Merchant, Director, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department

Michael Moore, County Administrator, Beaufort County

Graeme Philp, Attorney, Graybill, Lansche & Vinzani (virtual)

Jeff Vinzani, Attorney, Graybill, Lansche & Vinzani (virtual)

Juliana Zadik, Deputy Director, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department

GUESTS PRESENT:

Jimmy Acosta, Asset and Risk Management Director, Town of Hilton Head Island

Dana Bauer, Sentinel Landscape Coordinator, Beaufort County Open Land Trust

Bronco Bostick

Michael Czymbor, The Forino Company

Bryce Donaghue, Land Stewardship Manager, Beaufort County Open Land Trust

Alex Hawley

Alice Howard, Chair, Beaufort County Council

Noah Krepps, Planning Director, Town of Port Royal

John Meltans

Justin Patel, The Forino Company

Caylor Romines, Director of Land Stewardship, Beaufort County Open Land Trust
Kate Schaefer, representing Beaufort County Open Land Trust
Eric Sowers
Dick Stewart, applicant
Elvio Tropeano
Kathleen Young, applicant
Van Willis, Town Manager, Town of Port Royal

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Carmen Avon Manning amended the agenda to include an update on the availability of the Green Space meetings to the public; applications that were submitted but the Green Space Committee has not seen; and is the Foothills property grant agreement available to the public. Vice Chair McElynn said these could be added to the agenda under Project Updates. Vice Chair McElynn said he would like a public discussion on the New River Forest appraisal. Peter Kristian made a motion to amend the agenda as proposed. Laurel Rhoten seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous. Carmen Avon Manning made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Senator Davis seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

REVIEW OF MINUTES – May 8, 2026:

Laurel Rhoten made a motion to adopt the minutes of the May 8, 2026 meeting. Peter Kristian seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Kathleen Young said it's wonderful to have an organization like this to save the green space and she is honored to be here.

NEW APPLICATIONS:

Farmland Preservation Application: John Farm I, II, III, St. Helena Island

Mark Davis used the computer projector to give an overview of the application.

Caylor Romines, representing the applicants, said there will be three separate conservation easements given the ownership structure of the tracts. It is 150 acres total. The property has traditionally been used for agriculture. The property ultimately drains into the St. Helena Sound, so there would be water quality benefits for protection of the property. The applicants are requesting 40% of the appraised value of the easements from the Green Space program. They hope to apply to the state Conservation Bank for 30% of the appraised value of the easements, and 30% of the value of the easements will be donated by the property owners.

In response to a question from Vice Chair McElynn, Caylor Romines said there is one dwelling on Tract II.

Mark Davis said this is a working farm with prime farmland soils and this is exactly what the Farmland Preservation Applications were designed to do.

Laurel Rhoten asked if the farming practices are described in the easements. Caylor Romines said the easements have not been drafted yet, but that is something that can be incorporated.

Peter Kristian asked what the potential for future development on these parcels is. Mark Davis said the current zoning is T2R, which allows one unit per three acres. Caylor Romines said the easements will be restrictive on the number of future homes.

In response to a question from Vice Chair McElynn, Mark Davis said the Green Space Program core due diligence includes a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, an appraisal, and a plat.

Peter Kristian made a motion to move the application forward to County Council with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms. The motion was seconded by Laurel Rhoten. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Fee Simple Application: Grid Properties Tract, Town of Port Royal

Mark Davis used the computer projector to give an overview of the application. Mark said this application was submitted directly to the County with the intent that it be used as a passive park. As such, the County needs to consider whether this property is something they want to own and provide operational future public access.

Dick Stewart, applicant, described the context—141 units being developed next door and the property has access to a traffic signal. The property is 3.3 acres. Originally, they considered it a restaurant site, but once they saw the cleared view, they thought they would offer it to the Green Space Program. Dick said he is offering \$200,000 toward the transaction. There are great trees and lovely views. The owner-submitted appraised value is \$1.3 million. Mark Davis clarified with the applicant the request is for \$1.1 million from the Green Space Program.

In response to a question from Laurel Rhoten, Dick Stewart said there is connectivity to the fishing pier. Mark Davis clarified there is a traffic signal there.

In response to a question from Carmen Avon Manning, Mark Davis said the property would be owned by Beaufort County and be used for a passive park. Carmen Avon Manning said in the Greenprint, when people were asked what they wanted to preserve, number one was habitat and less development. Passive parks was down at like 20%. People like active parks and in Bluffton they want ballfields because their kids have no place to play. Passive parks are nice, but we have a lot of them. Mark Davis said allowing Green Space money to fund active parks would require an ordinance change.

In response to a question from Peter Kristian, Noah Krepps said the zoning of the property is T4 Neighborhood Center Open.

Brian Hulbert asked if there has been conversation with the developer of the adjacent new development to see if they would like to participate. Dick Stewart said the developer is Forino and they might be interested based on new ownership.

Senator Davis made a motion to move the application forward to the County Council with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms. The motion was seconded by Peter Kristian. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Planned Development Buydown Application: V&R Investment Tract, Town of Port Royal

Mark Davis used the computer projector to give an overview of the application. The property is across SC 170 from the Grid Properties Tract. This is being submitted as a joint application between the property owner and the Town of Port Royal. The property would be owned by the Town, and the application says it will not have public access; it would be more to preserve the viewshed and be restored to a more natural condition. This is a planned development. It would be a buydown and per the ordinance, there are matching requirements. Buydowns are one of the application types and there are two types of buydown applications—one that offers public access and one that doesn't, and depending on which type it is determines the level of the match that is required. In response to a question from Peter Kristian, Mark said based on the application submitted, the property would be bought outright; there would be no remaining entitlements on the property, and the property would be restored. Mark clarified the Town of Port Royal would own the property.

Noah Krepps explained the PUD that contains the property. The only vehicular access to this property is from the deceleration lane on SC 170. The master plan for the PUD included the vision of a trail going under the bridge to connect to the Broad River boat access. The property is under General Commercial zoning from the previous zoning ordinance so a host of commercial uses could be done there. It is 3.6 acres. The strip mall that had been there has been demolished. The developer's representative said there is active development for a convenience store and Marriot property. The representative said the appraisal was for \$3.68 million. Green Space is being asked for \$3.75 million. Noah said the Town is not prepared at this time to provide a match; there would need to be discussion.

Vice Chair McElynn said absent a match, the GSAC should probably postpone consideration of the application. Van Willis said the Town's budget is \$11.8 million annually, so the feasibility of any substantial match is going to be quite a challenge.

Carmen Avon Manning asked if the application could come in as a Corridor application. Mark said he would be happy to meet with the applicants to see how a Corridor Application might work, but right now this is a planned development with development rights, so it falls under that requirement.

In response to a question from Vice Chair McElynn, Van Willis said he thought the Town would be willing to participate at a certain level yet to be determined; 30-40% would not be feasible.

Mark Davis noted the appraisal is the owner's appraisal. There would be other appraisals done.

Senator Davis made a motion to carry the application over to the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Peter Kristian. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Peter Kristian made a motion to go into Executive Session pursuant to S.C. Code Section 30-4-70 (A) (2): discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements for the following Green Space Program applications:

- Fee Simple Application – Pine Grove Plantation Tracts, St. Helena Island
- Fee Simple Application – Harper Tracts, St. Helena Island

Laurel Rhoten seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

The Committee was in Executive Session from 10:41 AM to 10:49 AM.

MATTERS ARISING OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Senator Davis said with regard to the Fee Simple applications for the Pine Grove Plantation Tracts and the Harper Tracts, there is apparently civil litigation involving those two tracts that is considering whether or not there is a prescriptive easement across the tracts to provide access to the cemetery, and so he moved that the Green Space Committee defer any further consideration of these two applications until such time as there is a final adjudication in regard to that action with finality, meaning there is no appellate or no appeal process and so that the Green Space Program can then properly assess the applications. Peter Kristian seconded the motion.

Vice Chair McElynn called for the vote. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Fee Simple Application: Broad Creek Marina, Town of Hilton Head Island

Vice Chair McElynn described the application. It is a 9.5-acre tract on Marshland Road that has waterfront property. It currently has a go-cart business and a ropes course. The Town would assume ownership. The price is \$15.4 million. Green Space is being asked for half of that, and the Town is providing the other half. The Town is also making a commitment to remove all the existing commercial enterprises so that the property can become a passive park with access to Broad Creek. County Council postponed consideration of the application until June 22 along with the New River Forest application. The reason for the postponement was Council did not feel they had adequate paperwork. He said that will be rectified and they will have adequate material when the vote occurs on June 22.

B. Project Updates (moved to the end of meeting)

C. Public Access to Meetings. Carmen Avon Manning mentioned the posting of agenda and minutes and televised meetings. Carmen said the Transportation Committee was advisory and

these meetings are televised. Carmen asked why aren't the Green Space meetings televised? Brian Hulbert said if the Committee wants the meetings televised, send a request to the County Administrator or to Council. Mark Davis said the Green Space Program has always followed FOIA law. The agendas are always posted. Once the minutes are approved, they are posted on the County website.

Senator Davis made a motion that the meetings be televised and that this request be transmitted to the County Administrator. Peter Kristian seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

D. Applications that have been submitted but not seen by the Green Space Committee.

Carmen Avon Manning said David Bartholomew mentioned this at the Council meeting. As defined in ordinance procedure, Mark Davis said that every single application that gets submitted comes to the Green Space Committee. Mark said if staff receives a pre-application request, a pre-application meeting is scheduled. Then staff follows up with an application to the applicant. People choose whether or not they want to apply. Vice Chair McElynn said Council Member Bartholomew said someone called him right before the meeting and mentioned this regarding some Lady's Island projects, but Mr. Bartholomew did not have time to verify any of this.

Senator Davis made a motion that the substance of what Mark described be put in writing and transmitted to Mr. Bartholomew. Laurel Rhoten seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

E. Foothills property grant agreement. Carmen Avon Manning asked if the public can now see the grant agreement. Mark said he was not sure how long it would take to show up in the Register of Deeds office upon being recorded. Brian Hulbert said an individual could either go to the Register of Deeds office after it is recorded or they could submit a FOIA request.

In response to a question from Senator Davis, Mark Davis said the grant to the Town of Bluffton was for Parcels A and B; Parcel C is still an active application in due diligence. County staff is continuing to work with the Town of Bluffton on Parcel C. Senator Davis asked what the outstanding issue is on that property. Brian Hulbert said the Town asked for a 6-month extension so they could continue pursuing the Willow Run purchase. The Town plans to come back to the Green Space Committee in late summer. Senator Davis said he is encouraged the Town is actively looking at all these parcels as there is value in scale in terms of master planning.

F. Appraisals for New River Forest. Vice Chair McElynn said there have been three appraisals done for this property. The GSAC is going to discuss releasing one of these appraisals (the County appraisal) to the public. The HOA sent a letter to all the residents regarding the possible Green Space purchase. There has been some confusion about the appraisals among the residents. There will be a Natural Resources Committee meeting on Monday where the application will be further discussed and considered. We thought it would be helpful to release the County appraisal to the public before the meeting. Vice Chair McElynn said the question

before the GSAC is whether the appraisal should be a FOIA release or should it be put out with an announcement and a link. Michael Moore said we would make the appraisal available to the public without the public having to make a FOIA request.

Senator Davis made a motion that the appraisal be made available to the public this afternoon, if possible, so that residents have the opportunity to look at it over the weekend so they can be informed for the Monday meeting. Peter Kristian seconded the motion.

Senator Davis said as a matter of policy, the Green Space Program typically does not make appraisals public because many times appraisals are the basis for buyers and sellers to decide on a contract sales price. But this is a unique situation; there is a pending contract for sale--the parties have struck a contract of sale establishing a purchase price, and the appraisal in this context would be important to release as it addresses some of the concerns expressed at the Council meeting. There were questions as to portions of the 5,000 acres that were below the mean high-water mark, which obviously could not be developed, and as to portions of the property that are wetlands. The appraisal addresses these questions.

Senator Davis said the second thing the appraisal will show to the public is that also factored in was the fact that there are existing development agreements and associated covenants that prevent the property from being developed for another 31 years. This was also taken into account in arriving at the \$45 million value. So, it appears there are 2,000 acres that are developable, not factoring into that the possibility that some of those wetlands could be mitigated and filled in and built upon. 2,000 acres of developable property with 13 miles of frontage on the New River; this is a bargain. This is exactly what this program was set up to do---to lock in a property at scale that the public could enjoy in perpetuity. Senator Davis said we're not just making acquisitions for people in their lifetimes here; we're making acquisitions that will protect the land for generations to come.

Senator Davis said the development pressures that are being focused on Southern Beaufort County are not going to abate; they are going to increase exponentially and at some point in time, the pressure on this acreage is going to be so intense that someday it is going to be developed. The purpose of this program is not just to benefit current residents; it's to benefit future generations. Senator Davis said when he drafted the state green space legislation, a tract like this is what he had in mind, and tracts like Tickton and Chelsa and Gregorie Neck--tracts of scale that can actually have an impact on quality of life. A tract of land like this just doesn't come available. The appraisal provides a point of departure to make those points more specifically and instills confidence in the public that all the concerns they are raising--wetlands, access--that releasing the appraisal provides a context which can provide good information.

Vice Chair McElynn, referring to the letter that Senator Davis had drafted and released that addressed every one of these same issues, said releasing the appraisal will go a long way to let residents see how well this was done.

Vice Chair McElynn asked how many potential units could be put on the 2,000 acres. Senator Davis said it's hard to pin that down as zoning is always subject to being changed. Mark Davis said it is hard to know development possibilities in the future, but if we follow the same pattern (as of today) in the nearby communities, 2.5 – 4 units per developable acre. Carmen Avon Manning said the Town of Bluffton tracts the number of units that are left to be developed in each PUD. Vice Chair McElynn said it could be around 5,000 units, with 10,000 people and 10,000 cars.

Senator Davis outlined the process by which the state might reimburse the County \$20 million for the purchase. He is the chair of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Subcommittee of the Senate Finance Committee. He said the Forestry Commission historically has received an appropriation of \$20-30 million annually for their priority capital purchases. He met with Scott Phillips, the State Forester, a few weeks ago and Scott said the New River Forest will be their number one project next year. The earliest the County could expect reimbursement would be after July 1, 2027. This reimbursement isn't guaranteed, but absent a major contraction in the general fund, the likelihood of this appropriation occurring is very strong.

Vice Chair McElynn asked if it is possible that the reimbursement could be paid in installments should there be a constriction in the state budget due to something like a recession. Senator Davis said all parties involved would need to be in agreement. The current deal is structured so that if the land is not conveyed to the Forestry Commission in three years, then it is conveyed to the County.

Kate Schaefer said there are back-up plans if that budget appropriation doesn't go through. There is the Federal Forest Legacy program which the state has had a lot of success within South Carolina. There are also partnerships with the military. She distributed two handouts pertaining to the New River Forest project, one from the Forestry Commission and one from The Nature Conservancy.

In response to a question from Brian Hulbert, Senator Davis said as he understood this, the existing extension takes the development agreement to 31 years. Kate Schaefer said the appraisal took all the extensions into consideration.

Vice Chair McElynn called for the vote to release the County appraisal. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Project Updates (continued) Mark Davis said the Buckfield project is closing next week. Caylor Romines said Victoria Bluff is going to the State Conservation Bank next week. Mark Davis reviewed the Green Space Program Funding Status.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 AM.

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