

MINUTES

Green Space Advisory Committee

May 8, 2026, 10:00 AM, Executive Conference Room, 100 Ribaut Road

CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair McElynn called the meeting to order at 10:00 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:

Timothy Evans

Senator Tom Davis (virtual)

T. Peter Kristian

Carmen Avon Manning

Larry McElynn, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael McShane, Chair

Laurel Rhoten

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

Dylan Kidd, Deputy County Attorney, Beaufort County

Rob Merchant, Director, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department

Michael Moore, County Administrator, Beaufort County

Graeme Philp, Attorney, Graybill, Lansche & Vinzani

Juliana Zadik, Long Range Planner, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department

GUESTS PRESENT:

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

David Bishop, The Nature Conservancy

Ben Brown, Strategic Initiatives Director, Town of Hilton Head Island

Alice Howard, Chair, Beaufort County Council

Caylor Romines, Director of Land Stewardship, Beaufort County Open Land Trust

Kate Schaefer, representing Beaufort County Open Land Trust

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APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Tim Evans made a motion to approve the agenda. Peter Kristian seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

REVIEW OF MINUTES – April 10, 2026:

Peter Kristian made a motion to adopt the minutes of the April 10, 2026 meeting. Tim Evans seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

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 - Broad Creek Marina
- Fee Simple Application - New River Forest

Tim Evans seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

The Committee was in Executive Session from 10:03 AM to 11:00 AM.

MATTERS ARISING OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Fee Simple Application, Broad Creek Marina, Town of Hilton Head

Peter Kristian asked Graeme Philip to read the motion: a motion recommending that Beaufort County Council approve a grant in the amount of \$7.7 million to the applicant, the Town of Hilton Head Island, to assist the Town with the acquisition of the Broad Creek Marina property, subject to the Town placing Restrictive Covenants protecting the property in a form acceptable to the County, and an agreement by the Town to remove the existing go-cart path and rope course improvements and restore those areas of the property to a natural condition. Peter Kristian said he places that motion on the table. Tim Evans seconded the motion.

The Vote:

Voting Yea - Senator Davis, Tim Evans, Peter Kristian, Vice Chair McElynn

Voting Nay - Carmen Avon Manning

Vice Chair McElynn confirmed there is one opposed and all the others in favor; the motion passes.

Peter Kristian said the Town has really come around from their first applications. Peter noted how cooperative the Town has been and partnering with the Town moving these projects forward. The Town has been very progressive in getting these projects, getting them approved, getting partners, and they should continue down that road. Vice Chair McElynn said it has been good to have them as partners. When people work together, many great things can be accomplished.

Fee Simple Application, New River Forest, Town of Bluffton

Vice Chair McElynn asked Graeme Philip to read the motion: a motion recommending that Beaufort County Council approve a grant in the amount of \$42 million to applicant, The Nature Conservancy, to assist applicant in the acquisition of the New River Forest property subject to an agreement by applicant: 1) applicant will agree to pursue all available federal and state grants, which will be used to reimburse the Green Space Program in the anticipated amount of at least \$20 million; 2) applicant will place Covenants and Restrictions or a conservation easement protecting the property in a form reasonably acceptable to the County within three years; 3) applicant will convey the property to the South Carolina Forestry Commission within three years or shall otherwise be required to convey the Property to the County. Peter Kristian said he places that motion on the table. Tim Evans seconded the motion.

Senator Davis clarified that regarding condition number three, in the event the Forestry Commission does not want the property, then it could go to Beaufort County. These are not two equivalent choices; if the first one (Forestry Commission) fails, then it goes to Beaufort County.

Peter Kristian said this is a unique property. This property will be a legacy to Beaufort County. This is the right thing to do at this time.

Tim Evans said this is a huge step that Beaufort County is taking. It is only going to come around this time.

Vice Chair McElynn said this is an opportunity we can't afford to miss.

The Vote:

Voting Yea - Senator Davis, Tim Evans, Peter Kristian, Vice Chair McElynn

Voting Nay - Carmen Avon Manning

Vice Chair McElynn confirmed there is one opposed and all the others in favor; the motion passes.

Vice Chair McElynn made a motion to move the projects for Council's consideration at their June 8 meeting. Tim Evans seconded the motion.

Carmen Avon Manning said she submitted an email to the attorneys requesting some clarification on the "equal" terminology in the ordinance. She would like some response. Dylan Kidd said Brian Hulbert is working on the change to the ordinance which will go before Council.

Vice Chair McElynn confirmed that everyone is in agreement that the projects would be presented for Council's consideration at their June 8 meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mark Davis said staff anticipates third reading of the ordinance amendment that allows projects to move directly to County Council on May 11, so all business that comes out of this committee will go directly to County Council moving forward.

Mark Davis said the Town of Hilton Head has officially withdrawn their Old Wild Horse Road application.

Senator Davis asked how much money would be left in the program assuming the two projects reviewed today went through. Vice Chair McElynn said without the reimbursement of the \$20 million and \$6 million that are on order, \$20 million would be left in the program. Senator Davis asked if there are any pending applications that might exhaust the remaining funds. Mark Davis said three new applications were submitted in the application cycle that just closed and that they would not exhaust the money.

Carmen Avon Manning asked if there was an update on the Buckwalter parcels. Mark Davis said it is on Council's agenda for their May 11 meeting.

David Bishop said that at some point, a public meeting about the New River Forest project would be advisable, with County Council, the Forestry Commission, and the Committee (GSAC) out in front on this. Vice Chair McElynn said there is a real need to ensure that what is accomplished here with this committee (GSAC) is delivered to the public, so they have an understanding of all the things that are happening.

Chair McShane joined the meeting virtually.

Vice Chair McElynn said the County needs to do a better job of letting everyone know regularly, exactly what the accomplishments have been here, so that people are aware of the good use their tax dollars are being used for, so when the County goes back for more, they will be agreeable to allow us to continue this very important program.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 AM.

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