



CONSERVATION AND GREENBELT ADVISORY COMMISSION

500 N. MAIN STREET
SUMMERVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA 29483

MINUTES
DORCHESTER COUNTY KENNETH F. WAGGONER SERVICE BUILDING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ST. GEORGE
February 07, 2024
5:30 P.M.

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, a notice was posted on the bulletin board 24 hours before the meeting, the following media outlets were notified: The Eagle-Record, The Summerville Journal Scene, The Post and Courier, WCBF Channel 2, WCIV Channel 4 and WCSC Channel 5.

PRESENT: Mr. Daniel Prohaska, Chairman
Ms. Catherine Brownlee
Ms. Rhonda Pereira
Ms. Edsel Taylor
Mr. Joel Wells
Ms. Kiera Reinertsen, Director of Planning and Zoning
Ms. Carolina Gomez-Bello, Conservation/Greenbelt Planner

ABSENT: Mr. Ray Walsh, Vice Chairman
Ms. Phyllis Hughes

Mr. Daniel Prohaska called to order the meeting of the Dorchester County Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission at 5:35 p.m. The invocation was given by Mr. Joel Wells, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

1. On the motion of Ms. Rhonda Pereira, seconded by Mr. Edsel Taylor, the Commission voted 5-0, to adopt the minutes from the December 21, 2023, Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission Meeting.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Luis Hernandez, a project scientist from consulting firm Weston & Sampson joined the meeting over video call to present the status and progress of the Greenbelt Master Plan Project and discuss the preliminary GIS datasets, maps, and analysis, as well as the development of a prioritization matrix for the project. Mr. Hernandez noted that up to this point in the project, the focus had been on GIS modeling, resiliency, and configuring the prioritization matrix to identify parcels for the master plan. He began a PowerPoint presentation and introduced several key Weston & Sampson team members who had been working on the Greenbelt Master Plan. He then discussed the project timeline, explaining the project's current focus, in which GIS data has been consolidated and GIS analysis is in the process of beginning—beginning of the consolidation of survey 1 and 2 results. Two community engagement events are also scheduled during this part of the project, one of which is tomorrow February 8th, 2024, at 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the Rosenwald School in St. George, and the second of which is next week at the 13th at the same time at Alston Middle School in Summerville. Hernandez continued that the planned delivery for the project is on April 3rd for the Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission review and May 6th for the council to vote on its adoption. Mr. Hernandez noted that there had been some discussion of combining the April 3rd presentation with the April 15th County Council meeting, but that this is up to the discretion of the commission and can be decided later. Mr. Hernandez then went into detail about the two surveys, explaining that the first survey ran in December and received 650 responses and that its focus was on the perception and use of green spaces in Dorchester County. Survey 2 went live on February 1st and focused more on information regarding greenspace needs and the level of service in Dorchester County.

Mr. Hernandez then discussed the GIS data collection strategies utilized to create the different data layers that will be important in future Greenbelt decision-making. He explained that various partners collaborated to collect approximately 25 different pieces of information that will be used in the master plan including the Dorchester County GIS Department, The Green Infrastructure Center/ South Carolina Green Infrastructure Plan, The South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, US Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service, South Carolina Audubon Society, South Carolina Office of Resiliency and FEMA. When meeting with various groups about GIS data collection and analysis, concerns about double coverage were raised, as a lot of data is similar. Data that was double-covered was pulled out as best as possible. Mr. Hernandez explained that the data sets can be viewed as a scoring set for Greenbelt criteria. He further explained that this means that parcels looking to be added to the Greenbelt can be compared to other parcels already designated as part of the Greenbelt to see what they look like and how they vary in their priority and standards. The prioritization standards need to have a long shelf life and need to apply to a wide variety of parcel types so at first, they moved away from the ranking system, but eventually shifted some variables to make the ranking system work by pulling out base data layers using the 100-year flood plain, Canopy Coverage, Habitat Core Rankings, Conservation Blueprint Priority Areas Existing Protected Landings, and SHPO Historic Preservation to compare land parcels year by year. Based on this, the parcels would then be ranked as high priority, medium priority, or low priority for Dorchester County's Greenbelt. Mr. Hernandez completed his presentation at this time and opened the floor to questions from the Advisory Commission.

Mr. Prohaska thanked Mr. Hernandez for his work and asked if the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index was one of the 25 pieces of data currently factored into the datasets. Mr. Hernandez went back in his presentation to the slide where he discussed the various sources where data was pulled from and noted that this set of data was used in the Southeast Blueprint listed under the sub-map for equitable access and potential parks. Mr. Hernandez also noted that Dorchester County and its partners are taking on the responsibility of maintaining all these datasets when they choose to include them in their ranking matrix. Mr. Prohaska then asked if the Swallowtail Kite data that the Avian Conservation Center provided for the County would be something that would fit under one of these blueprint criteria. Mr. Hernandez explained that the data may not have been included if it came out towards the end of 2023, but that it could be added to the base set of data. Ms. Brownlee then asked if Mr. Hernandez would share his presentation with the commission members after the meeting, which he agreed to do. While viewing a green space density map for the county, Mr. Wells noted that there was quite a bit more "red" (areas 10 miles from a green space)

in the northern part of the county than in the southern part of the county. He also noted that there was even a small section at the uppermost part of the county without a greenspace within a 10-mile radius and noted that that would be something that they would have to focus on when they start looking at specific requests. Mr. Hernandez then stated that when they have the engagement events, they will be able to gather information on willingness to travel and community access to green spaces, information currently missing from the GIS datasets that is critical. Mr. Hernandez then briefly detailed some of the various interactive maps that will be displayed at the engagement sessions which will produce valuable information that will be incorporated into the GIS datasets and the priority matrix. Mr. Prohaska asked if the commission needed to weigh in on combining the April 3rd deadline with the April 15th council meeting that evening and Mr. Hernandez noted that it was not necessary. Mr. Taylor then asked Mr. Hernandez how members of the commission can best be involved in the public engagement sessions, to which he responded that their level of engagement is entirely up to them and that the most important thing they can do is participate. However, if they wished to help facilitate the sessions and work at a station, that is something that could be arranged.

Mr. Prohaska asked if there were any more questions for Mr. Hernandez, and as there were not, Mr. Prohaska moved on to the next item on the agenda. However, this item was already covered by Mr. Hernandez in his presentation, a fact which was clarified to the council by Ms. Reinertsen.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Ms. Brownlee, seconded by Ms. Pereira, the Commission voted 5-0 in favor to adjourn at approximately 6:11 p.m.