



CONSERVATION AND GREENBELT ADVISORY COMMISSION

500 N. MAIN STREET
SUMMERVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA 29483

MINUTES
DORCHESTER COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING
COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, SUMMERVILLE
May 1, 2024
5:30 PM

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

PRESENT: Mr. Daniel Prohaska, Chairman
Mr. Ray Walsh, Vice Chairman
Ms. Catherine Brownlee
Ms. Phyllis Hughes
Ms. Rhonda Pereira
Ms. Edsel Taylor
Mr. Joel Wells
Mr. Bryan Havir, Asst Administrator for Community Services
Ms. Kiera Reinertsen, Director of Planning and Zoning
Ms. Carolina Gomez-Bello, Conservation/Greenbelt Planner

Mr. Daniel Prohaska called to order the meeting of Dorchester County Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission at 5:33 p.m. The invocation was also given by Mr. Prohaska, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance by Mr. Taylor.

MINUTES

1. On the motion of Mr. Walsh seconded by Mr. Taylor, the Commission voted 7-0, to adopt the minutes from the April 10, 2024, Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission Meeting.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The meeting commenced with the final review and discussion of the Greenbelt Master Plan. Chairman Prohaska initiated the Master Plan review by highlighting several ongoing minor tweaks, primarily focusing on grammatical corrections, to finalize the document. He identified several small corrections that County staff noted and invited others to share any additional edits or discussion points. Ms. Hughes sought clarification on property ownership of projects funded by the County Greenbelt Program. Mr. Prohaska explained that property ownership would be determined on a case-by-case basis, with title transfer occurring in some cases, while in other cases, ownership would remain with the original deed holder. Ms. Reinertsen added that each application would specify whether the applicant sought a fee-simple purchase by the County, County acquisition of property ownership, or a conservation easement or other agreement. Mr. Prohaska emphasized that the County would consider property ownership as part of its decision-making process.

Chairman Prohaska then moved to the next agenda item, making a recommendation regarding the Greenbelt Master Plan to Dorchester County Council. On a motion by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Ms. Brownlee, the Commission unanimously voted to recommend that County Council adopt the Greenbelt Master Plan.

Mr. Prohaska inquired if there were any further Greenbelt Master Plan discussion points. Ms. Hughes raised a question about the adaptability of the Plan. Mr. Prohaska clarified that while the Master Plan provides guidelines for evaluating requests or applications using Greenbelt funds, County Council ultimately holds the final say on fund usage within Ordinance guidelines. Specific projects, parcels, and applications are to be evaluated on an ad hoc basis. Ms. Pereira asked whether the ArcGIS Pro suitability model would need to be run for every new application. Ms. Gomez-Bello explained that while the suitability model should be conducted for each parcel to generate a suitability score, it would not be the sole tool used. A low score on the suitability index would not exclude funding; rather, additional factors would be considered to comprehensively assess a parcel's value to the County. Ms. Hughes then highlighted water conservation as a pressing County issue and inquired about utilizing Greenbelt funds to restore waterways. Mr. Wells attributed waterway congestion to an increase in the beaver population and assured that steps were being taken to address this issue. Mr. Prohaska stated that while the Commission could recommend prioritizing the issue, Greenbelt funds are designated to primarily target land conservation rather than specific management strategies like beaver trapping.

Ms. Gomez-Bello announced a schedule change, moving the Greenbelt Master Plan presentation to the May 20, 2024, County Council meeting to allow for additional review time.

Lastly, the meeting addressed any known future Greenbelt conservation projects or inquiries. Ms. Reinertsen mentioned five potential projects that could submit applications soon, alongside the Limehouse tract. Mr. Wells highlighted properties connecting Beidler Forest and Audubon Four-Holes Swamp, which would create a 30-thousand-plus-acre conservation corridor if acquired. Ms. Brownlee inquired about

securing additional funding sources and matching partners for applicant properties. Ms. Gomez-Bello outlined the Conservation/Greenbelt planner's role in seeking and applying for additional funds and grants, which would be an ongoing process. Ms. Pereira sought clarification on the Conservation/Greenbelt Planner's role in applicant vetting, to which Ms. Gomez-Bello explained their function as a liaison, aiding in information gathering for proper vetting, with the Commission responsible for advising County Council before their final funding decisions. Mr. Prohaska requested information on potential project inquiries for the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Mr. Walsh seconded by Ms. Hughes, the Commission voted 7-0 in favor to adjourn at approximately 6:06 p.m.