

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK

Wednesday, February 19, 2020– 10:00 am
DNR Board Room, Rembert C. Dennis Building
Columbia, SC 29201

The South Carolina Conservation Bank Board (SCCB) held a quarterly meeting on Wednesday, February 19, 2020, at 10:00 am in the Board Room of the SC Department of Natural Resources, Rembert C. Dennis Building, Columbia, SC 29201. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was posted and mailed to the news media in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. Chairman Michael McShane presided at the meeting and members present included Thomas Lavender, Vice-Chairman, Andrea Clark, Geordy Johnson, Charles Lane, Curtis Spencer, Richmond Wilhoit, Jr., Keith Williamson, Larry Yonce; and Ex-Officio members Dr. Walt McPhail, SC Forestry Commission Chairman; and Norman F. Pulliam, Chairman SCDNR. Board Members absent were Elliott Close and Brent McLaurin, and ex-officio member Justin Hancock for Duane Parrish, Director for SCPRT.

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McShane called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for their attendance.

2) ROLL CALL

Chairman McShane asked Ms. Pennebaker to call roll of the Board Members. Ms. Pennebaker called roll and a quorum was established with 9 Board Members and 2 Ex-Officio members in attendance. Chairman McShane stated that proper public notice had been given for the meeting.

3) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. McShane opened the floor to anyone who would like to address to the Board. There being no public comments, Mr. McShane called for the next agenda item.

4) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. McShane stated the Board was sent a draft copy of the December 4, 2019, Quarterly Meeting minutes prior to the meeting for their review and that a copy was within the Board Member handouts. The Chairman asked for any additions, deletions, or corrections. There being none, the Chairman called for a motion to adopt the minutes from the December 4, 2019, meeting. Mr. Lane made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Lavender seconded and the motion unanimously passed.

5) CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman McShane began his comments with a thank you to SCCB staff for an excellent job on the Annual Report. He also extended a hearty congratulations to Mr. Pulliam and the SCDNR Board on the confirmation of Robert Boyles as SCDNR Director. Chairman McShane stated that we are delighted he is in the role and look forward to continued collaboration between the two agencies. Next, Chairman McShane updated Board members on the budget process, stating that SCCB has received positive comments from the House Ways and Means subcommittee. The Senate Finance subcommittee hearing is scheduled for March 12th. As a reminder, SCCB is requesting \$15 million for projects (\$7.5 million recurring/\$7.5 million non-recurring, plus operations and the \$3

million DNR transfer. SCCB Finance Committee and Bank staff will continue to work on the budget process and inform the Board of any relevant updates.

6) OLD BUSINESS

Chairman McShane asked Mr. West to update the Board on the status of Cycle 1 Approved Projects: Nine projects totaling \$4,500,397.50 have closed and there are 10 projects totaling \$2,016,607.00 to be closed prior to the end of the fiscal year (see Board packet). Mr. West stated that all applicants have sent in email confirmation that outstanding projects will close by end of fiscal year. The applicants in attendance were reminded to let staff know of any changes to expected closing dates of their projects. Next, the Chairman asked Mr. West to deliver the Financial Report (see Board packet). The Chairman summarized by saying that SCCB has \$5,585,887.28 available for grants. The application deadline for Cycle 2 projects was January 31, 2020, and those applications will be considered at today's meeting.

7) NEW BUSINESS

a) **Conflicts of Interest Among Applicants**

Mr. West highlighted a minor change on application template asking applicants to disclose any conflicts of interest between the applicant and the landowner. This disclosure does not disqualify an application but informs the Bank Board if conflicts of interest exist and how they will be handled.

b) **Shape Files for Protected Lands**

Mr. West discussed importance of updated shape files and pointed out that projects look more compelling when protected properties are accurate and updated. Having these up-to-date shape files particularly affects "corridor" type projects.

c) **Review of Pending Applications**

Chairman McShane yielded the floor to Grants Review Committee Chairman Lavender for a review of pending applications. Mr. Lavender reiterated the need for the applications to accurately reflect connectivity to other conserved properties as well as any other compelling information so that the committee has the necessary metrics to evaluate and rank the projects. Mr. Lavender then began the review of applications for the current cycle:

Black River State Park – Phase I

Open Space Institute (OSI) submitted an application for \$811,000 to acquire 318 acres in fee simple in Williamsburg County. Maria Whitehead from OSI spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$811,000, Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed unanimously.

Stumphouse Mountain Expansion

The Nature Conservancy submitted an application for \$900,000 to acquire 793.01 acres in fee simple in Oconee County. Mr. Pulliam and Kristen Austin (TNC) spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$900,000, Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed unanimously.

Stuck 2020 Property

Nation Ford Land Trust submitted an application for \$350,000 to acquire a conservation easement of 2,719 acres in York County. Steve Hamilton of Nation Ford Land Trust spoke in favor of the project and its role in protecting the southern part of the proposed Greenbelt around York. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$350,000, Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mill Shoals Community Forest

Naturaland Trust submitted an application for \$1,660,000 to acquire 733 acres in fee simple in Pickens County. Mac Stone of Naturaland Trust and Tom Waynham of SCDNR spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$1,660,000, provided that Naturaland Trust will apply for a \$600,000 matching grant from the Community Forest Program and, if successful, will return any related proceeds. Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed unanimously.

Core Bunched Arrowhead Preserve

Naturaland Trust submitted an application for \$40,000 to acquire 16.72 acres in fee simple in Greenville County. Mac Stone of Naturaland Trust spoke in favor of the project, and Ken Prosser answered questions regarding Heritage Trust component of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$40,000, Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation and the motion passed unanimously.

Battle of Port Royal (Kling)-Liberty Trail

SC Battleground Preservation Trust submitted an application for \$125,000 to acquire 3.73 acres in fee simple in Beaufort County. Barbara Holmes of BCOLT spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$125,000. Chairman McShane moved to approve the recommendation. Ms. Clark amended the motion to make the grant approval contingent on the three adjoining parcels associated with the project also being protected, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Lane and Mr. Johnson recused themselves from voting.

Battle of Port Royal (Harris Pillow)-Liberty Trail

SC Battleground Preservation Trust submitted an application for \$227,963 to acquire 6.08 acres in fee simple in Beaufort County. Barbara Holmes of BCOLT spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$227,963. Chairman McShane moved to approve the recommendation. Ms. Clark amended the motion to make the grant approval contingent on the three adjoining parcels associated with the project also being protected, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Lane and Mr. Johnson recused themselves from voting.

Battle of Tulifinny-Liberty Trail

SC Battleground Preservation Trust submitted an application for \$117,500 to acquire 2.20 acres in fee simple in Jasper County. The Grants Review Committee did not have a recommendation on this project due to concerns about the limited scope and expense of the project. Chairman McShane made a motion to decline without prejudice the project and invited the applicant to reapply after addressing the concerns of the Board. Ms. Clark seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Lane and Mr. Johnson recused themselves from voting.

Big Rock Access Expansion

Naturaland Trust submitted an application for \$10,000 to acquire 1 acre in fee simple in Pickens County. Mac Stone of Naturaland Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$10,000, Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed unanimously.

Rosemont Plantation Expansion

The Rosemont Preservation Society submitted an application for \$350,000 to acquire 123.82 acres in fee simple in Laurens County. Ernie Seegars of Rosemont Preservation Society spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$350,000, Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed unanimously.

Willow Lake (Bamberg Tract)

Lowcountry Land Trust submitted an application for \$278,100 to acquire a conservation easement on 1,373.12 acres in Bamberg County. Josh Bell of Lowcountry Land Trust and Aly Spulgis of Ducks Unlimited spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended funding this project at \$278,000, Chairman McShane called for a vote to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed unanimously.

Sandy Run Forest

Upstate Forever submitted an application for \$130,000 to acquire a conservation easement on 237.3 acres in Union County. The Grants Review Committee offered no recommendation on this project and requested the applicant to provide more details about the project. Scott Park of Upstate Forever spoke in favor of the project, emphasizing the importance of protecting Pacolet River watershed. Mr. Pulliam also spoke in favor of the project as part of a larger conservation strategy to protect property in Union County. Mr. Lane made a motion to fund the project at \$130,000, Ms. Clark seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Lyle Property

Oconee County Soil and Water Conservation District submitted an application for \$143,300 to acquire a conservation easement on 165.89 acres in Oconee County. The Grants Review Committee does not have a recommendation on this project and requested the applicant to provide more details about the project. Eddie Martin of the OCSWD spoke in favor of the project and discussed the role this project plays in the larger conservation strategy of OCSWD around the Sumter National Forest. Mr. Lane made a motion to fund the project at \$143,000, Mr. Spencer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

In closing this part of the meeting, Mr. Lavender reemphasized the importance of the content of the application in funding decisions. He urged the applicants to show other protected properties, demonstrate connectivity, and explain the strategy involved.

8) EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman McShane called for a motion to enter Executive Session for the purposes of discussing a personnel matter. Mr. Lavender made the motion, Ms. Clark seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

9) BOARD MEMBER OPEN DISCUSSION

Upon return from Executive Session, Chairman McShane stated that no action was taken during Executive Session. The Chairman invited Board members and staff to make any comments. Dr. McPhail appreciated the thorough review process of the GRC. Mr. Williamson discussed accurate mapping and its importance to applications. Mr. Yonce talked about making decisions in the best interest of every citizen of the state and being mindful of the trust given the Board with public money. Mr. West thanked Board for collaboration and the staff for their hard work. Chairman McShane recognized Bank counsel Sterling Moose and thanked her for being present today's meeting.

10) TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman stated that the next Board meeting will be on Wednesday, May 20th at 11:00am at Belfast Plantation near Kinards, SC (Laurens County).

11) ADJOURN

The Chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lane made the motion, Mr. Lavender seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.