

MINUTES
SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK
Wednesday, December 13, 2023 - 11:00 am
Founders Dairy Barn at Anne Springs Close Greenway, Fort Mill, SC

The South Carolina Conservation Bank Board (SCCB) held its quarterly meeting on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 11:00 am at the Founders Dairy Barn at Anne Springs Close Greenway, 288 Dairy Barn Lane, Fort Mill, SC. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was posted and mailed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act to the persons, organizations, and news media as have requested such notification. Chairman Michael McShane presided at the meeting and members present included Rob Howell, Peter King, Charles Lane, Thomas Lavender, Pamela S. Porter, Thomas Mullikin, Curtis Spencer, Jared Thompson, Richmond Wilhoit, Jr.; and Ex-Officio members Russell Hubright for Dr. Walt McPhail, SC Forestry Commission Chairman, Norman F. Pulliam, Chairman SCDNR, and Justin Hancock for Duane Parrish, Chairman SCPRT. Board Member absent was Dr. Brent McLaurin.

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McShane called the meeting to order, welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance. Mr. McShane began the day's proceedings by recognizing special guests in attendance. He then recognized and expressed gratitude to former Board member Elliott Close for hosting the meeting and the board member private tour of the Anne Springs Close Greenway. Mr. Close, John Gordon, and Elizabeth Bowers all spoke about the Greenway and gave a brief presentation on its history and current activities.

2) ROLL CALL

Chairman McShane called roll and a quorum was established with 10 Board Members and 3 Ex-Officio members in attendance. Mr. McShane stated that proper public notice had been given for the meeting. He further reminded Board members to state any conflicts of interest during the meeting and recuse themselves from discussion or voting on those matters by completing the recusal form in their board member packets.

3) CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman McShane invited Board member Charles Lane to say a few words in memory of Doug Bostick, the former Director of SC Battleground Trust and requested a few moments of silence in honor of Mr. Bostick. Next, Mr. McShane reminded the Board that the two-year terms for Board Chair and Vice-Chair begins January 1, 2024, and he requested nominations for these two positions. Mr. Lane nominated Mike McShane and Curtis Spencer to serve as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively and Mr. Lavender seconded. There being no other nominations, the Chairman called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. McShane and Mr. Curtis abstained from voting.

4) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. McShane opened the floor to anyone who would like to address to the Board. Laura Ringo and Aldon Knight delivered a brief presentation about the Saluda Grade Connector Rails to Trails project. Next, Gary Spires of SC Farm Bureau Federation spoke about newly established SC Farm Bureau Land Trust. There being no other public comments, Mr. McShane called for the next agenda item.

5) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. McShane stated the Board was sent a draft copy of the 09/27/2023 Quarterly Meeting minutes prior to the meeting for their review and that copies were within the Board Member meeting materials. The Chairman asked for any additions, deletions, or corrections to the meeting minutes. There being none, Mr. Lavender made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Spencer seconded, and the motion unanimously passed.

6) NEW BUSINESS

a) Director's Update

Director West thanked Board members for attending the prior day's celebration of the Catawba-Nisbet project. He appreciates board members taking time out of their personal schedules to travel for these meetings, and he hopes that members benefit from seeing first-hand some of the conservation work accomplished around the state and establish ties with local land protection stakeholders.

b) Project Updates

Director West distributed a list of projects and updated Board members on their status. 26 projects totaling almost \$24.5 million with the collective protection of 7,527.1 acres have closed so far during FY24. There are 24 outstanding projects, the vast majority of which were approved at the previous Board meeting.

c) Financial Report

A summary of the Bank's financial position was included within the Board member handouts. Director West reported that the Bank has \$27,855,770.03 in unobligated funds available for new grants. Mr. West highlighted that approximately \$15 million of the current funds are SC Office of Resilience funds approved at the December 5, 2023, Joint Bond Review Committee meeting. Mr. West also stated that several reimbursable grants are forecast to close this year which, once received, will increase the amount of funds available for new grant applications. Next, Chairman McShane reminded Board members of the FY25 budget submission. The Bank is requesting \$5 million in recurring funds and \$22.5 million in non-recurring. The \$5 million recurring funds request is an increase to our current recurring amount of 7.5 million, so the budget request represents a total of \$35 million, which is close to FY24 Appropriations. Bank staff has not yet been informed of the date of the next budget hearing but expects the Criminal Justice subcommittee of the House Ways & Means Committee will meet in early February. Bank staff will attend the hearing in support of the request.

d) Grants Review Committee Recommendations

Chairman McShane yielded the floor to Director West and Mr. Lane to present a review of pending applications and the Grants Review Committee's funding recommendations for the current cycle:

Ashley River - Barry Tract

Lowcountry Land Trust applied for a \$2,100,000 grant to acquire 67 acres in fee simple in Dorchester County. Ashley Demosthenes of Lowcountry Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The applicant has requested a deferral of this project to a future round pending a potential National Coastal Wetlands grant. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #1, deferral of the application, and Bank sponsorship of a National Coastal Wetlands grant. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Waites - Merrill Boyce Tracts

Open Space applied for a \$8,000,000 grant to acquire 108 acres in fee simple in Horry County. Maria Whitehead of Open Space Institute spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #2 with no funding recommendation. Mr. Lane made a motion to amend the recommendation to a funding level of \$8,000,000 with a reimbursement of up to \$6,000,000. Mr. Spencer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Waites - Olivia Boyce Tracts

Open Space Institute applied for a \$4,000,000 grant to acquire 114 acres in fee simple in Horry County. Maria Whitehead of Open Space Institute spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #3 and a funding level of \$4,000,000 with a reimbursement of up to \$1,000,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Forty Acre Rock Farm

Open Space Institute applied for a \$195,000 grant to acquire 97 acres in fee simple in Lancaster County. Patrick Moore of Open Space Institute spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee

recommended a rank of #4 and a funding level of \$195,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Limehouse

Dorchester County applied for a \$3,000,000 grant to acquire 103 acres in fee simple in Dorchester County. Jason Ward of Dorchester County spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #5 and a funding level of \$1,400,000. Mr. Spencer seconded. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Witherspoon Island

Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$850,000 grant for a 3,708-acre conservation easement in Darlington County. Lyles Cooper of Pee Dee Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #6 and a funding level of \$850,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Kings Mountain-Metker

Open Space Institute applied for a \$1,700,000 grant to acquire 48 acres in fee simple in York County. Patrick Moore of Open Space Institute spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #7 and a funding level of \$1,700,000 with a reimbursement of up to \$500,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Oconee Station Connector

Director West disclosed that he has a potential conflict of interest. Upstate Forever applied for a \$122,500 grant for a 64-acre conservation easement in Oconee County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #8 and a funding level of \$112,500. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Gramling

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$560,000 grant for a 767-acre conservation easement in Orangeburg County. Mary Crockett of Congaree Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #9 and a funding level of \$560,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Oakland Plantation

Upstate Preservation Trust applied for a \$602,500 grant to acquire 52 acres in fee simple in Greenville County. Sam Hayes of Upstate Preservation Trust and Carlton Owen of Greenville County Historic & Natural Resources Preservation Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #10 and a funding level of \$602,500. Mr. Lane amended the recommendation to include that grant funds will only be released upon satisfactory recording of Greenville County's partnership. Mr. Lavender seconded the amended application and the motion passed unanimously.

Pudding Swamp - Atkinson Farm

Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$150,000 grant for a 380-acre conservation easement in Williamsburg County. Seth Cook of Pee Dee Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #11 and a funding level of \$150,000, and the motion passed unanimously.

Pearl Bottoms

Upstate Forever applied for a \$143,000 grant for a 60-acre conservation easement in Greenville County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #12 and a funding level of \$143,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Shealy Farm

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Lane & Mr. Lavender recused themselves from discussion or voting on this project. SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$242,000 grant for a 339-acre conservation easement in Newberry County. Richard Carr of SC Farm Bureau Land Trust and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. Chairman McShane reported that the Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #13 and a funding level of \$242,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Keowee Ridge

Upstate Forever applied for a \$130,000 grant for a 67-acre conservation easement in Pickens County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever of spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #14 and a funding level of \$130,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Cedarleaf Farm

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Lane & Mr. Lavender recused themselves from discussion or voting on this project. SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$90,000 grant for a 65-acre conservation easement in Chester County. Richard Carr of SC Farm Bureau Land Trust and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. Chairman McShane reported that the Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #15 and a funding level of \$90,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Hiott Station

Lowcountry Land Trust applied for a \$175,000 grant for a 553-acre conservation easement in Colleton County. Ashley Demosthenes of Lowcountry Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #16 and a funding level of \$175,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Hope Station

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$573,111 grant for a 1,081-acre conservation easement in Chester County. Mary Crockett of Congaree Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #17 and a funding level of \$573,100. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

McQueen Farm

Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$110,000 grant for a 246-acre conservation easement in Marlboro County. Seth Cook of Pee Dee Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #18 and a funding level of \$110,000. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Harrison Street Properties

The Town of Pendleton applied for a \$197,400 grant to acquire 11 acres in fee simple in Anderson County. Steve Miller of the Town of Pendleton spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #19 and a funding level of \$165,000. Mr. Lane amended the recommendation to a funding level of \$165,000 conditioned on the Bank Director receiving assurance that Bank funds will only be utilized for land protection. Mr. Lavender seconded the amended recommendation and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Brown Land and Timber

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$103,850 grant for a 309-acre conservation easement in Fairfield County. Mary Crockett of Congaree Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #20 and a funding level of \$103,850. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

8) BOARD MEMBER OPEN DISCUSSION

During the Board member open discussion, Dr. Mullikin requested status on Board policies and procedures related to Sec. 48-59-70 of the Bank's statute regarding the promulgation of regulations for the procurement of appraisal services. Chairman McShane requested Director West to review the statute with legal counsel and offer a summary at the March 2024 Board meeting. Chairman McShane offered an orientation session for any interested Board members. Chairman McShane also requested that Bank staff ensure new Board members have received their Board member informational binders. In addition to these comments, several members expressed their gratitude to Board leadership and Bank staff.

Next, Chairman McShane stated that the Grants Review Committee members for 2024-2026 are Charles Lane (Chair), Rob Howell, Tom Mullikin, Jared Thompson, Norman Pulliam, and ex-officio member SCCB Board Chair Mike McShane.

9) TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman stated that the next Board meeting will be on Thursday, March 21, 2024, at the SC Office of Resilience office in Columbia, SC. The Grants Review Committee will meet in Columbia on 03/06/2024.

10) ADJOURN

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