

Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust
Minutes May 11, 2023
Greenville County Council Chamber

Chair Carlton Owen called the meeting of GCHNRT to order at 5:30 PM. He determined there was a quorum and asked for roll call. Secretary Shucker called the roll.

Members Present: Carlton Owen (17), Pam Shucker (19), Alex Reynolds (20), Joe Pulliam (22), Doug Harper (24), Ken Baxter (25), Bryant Harrison (26), Dennis DeFrancesco (27)

Members Absent: Nanette Iatesta (18), Tripp Taylor (23), Matthew Thomas (28), Dave Hargett (21).

Lyle Parks, the incoming representative for District 21, replacing Dave Hargett, visited the meeting and introduced himself.

Chair Owen asked that the minutes reflect appreciation to Mr. Hargett for his service.

Chair Owen also acknowledged and introduced Mark Tollison, Greenville County Attorney, who is on the agenda.

Chair Owen reviewed the Agenda and recognized no public present, thus no need for executive session.

The Minutes, having been sent previously by email, received unanimous approval after Mr. Harrison's motion for approval and Mr. Harper's second.

Mr. Tollison reminded all that as members of a Greenville County Council Board or Commission each is under legal obligation to follow the State Ethics Act of 1991. As members with information coming before the public there must be no personal gain. Thus, there can be no conflict of interest regarding the projects coming before the Trust and a Board member's other interests. These include family, non-profit organizations, businesses and other entities. If a member is part of another organization that could gain from actions of the GCHNRT, then the member must recuse themselves from the discussions and voting. Mr. Tollison suggested avoiding even the appearance of a conflict; if such exists, take the most conservative stance. Membership in large groups, such as church or service club would not require recusal.

An official recusal must be a written statement submitted to the Chair. The Trust has opted to list all recusals from this point forward as an addendum to minutes.

Should a member have questions regarding a situation that might require recusal, they may contact the General Counsel of the SC Ethics Commission, Courtney Laster.

On the topic of Proxy Voting Mr. Tollison simply advised against its use and instead make use of teleconferencing and video participation to maximize participation.

Mr. Owen thanked Mr. Tollison for these refreshers and clarifications.

Secretary Shucker advised members to be aware that she is required as Secretary to turn in quarterly attendance reports. Attendance is expected to be 75% of the meetings.

Chair Owen noted that the Communications Committee did not have a report.

Grants Chair Pulliam relayed information on previous Project Cycles that have not closed. Horsepen Creek I and II have not closed. Horsepen I has been complicated by a death in the family seeking the conservation easement. Horsepen II should close soon.

Grants Chair Pulliam continued with Cycle 5 Projects, both of which members visited the previous week.

1. Project #20 – Camp Awanita, District. #17 - 542 acres. The value of the conservation easement is \$2,140,000 with \$350,000 requested from the Trust and a donation value of \$740,000. A portion of the Camp that encompasses the improvements is not included at the request of the bank holding a mortgage on the camp, but a first right-of-refusal with The Nature Conservancy is in place should the camp be sold. Another negotiated addition is for one day of the year to be open to enable the public to visit the property. The Grants Committee recommended Project #20 to the full Board.

The current budget proviso allows the Trust to allocate up to \$200,000 without returning for a Council vote. Therefore, Project #20, would have to go before the Finance Committee and three readings of Council for a final decision.

Mr. Harrison called the question for the vote. The Board voted unanimously to accept Project #20 and to seek approval from County Council.

2. Project # 21 Hereford Hill Farm – 101 acres with a conservation easement value of \$487,000. Request is for \$75,000 and donation value of \$233,000.

Mr. Bryant Harrison recused himself from discussing and voting on Project #21 as his own farm is adjacent to the Hereford Hill Farm. (See addendum).

The Grants Committee recommended Project #21 to the full board. Mr. Reynolds called the question. A unanimous vote by the HNRT Board approved Project #21.

Mr. Pulliam also reported the Grants committee had made some minor adjustments to the ranking sheet used for projects. These will be tested in Cycle #6. Members voted unanimously in support of the changes.

Mr. Owen noted that if all projects that have been approved move to closing the Trust will carry forward just shy of \$250,000. The Administrator's draft budget for 2023-2024 includes \$2 million for each of the next two years. Mr. Owen asked that each member contact their Council member to encourage support for the Administrator's request and to share feedback from those contacts.

Chair Owen acknowledged that 5 members who were up for re-appointment received re-appointment. Dave Hargett did not seek re-appointment. The other 6 will be up for re-appointment next year.

Chair Owen announced that HNRT will be awarded a \$100,000 award from Greenville Women Giving to be used in support of a pilot with the newly created SC Farm Bureau Land Trust to help

African American farmers retain their lands. The number of Black-owned farms in the U.S. has declined by 95% over the last century while our nation's population has tripled.

Mr. Harrison called for adjournment. Voted unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Addendum:

HISTORICAL RECORD OF RECUSALS BY TRUST BOARD MEMBERS

Doug Harper is a non-paid, volunteer member of the Board of Directors of **Naturaland Trust** one of the eligible entities that from time-to-time presents grant requests to the Trust. Mr. Harper stated his position with Naturaland Trust (conforming with qualification criteria one set forth in the Trust's ordinance) at the inaugural meeting of the Trust Board **April 21, 2021**. Therefore, Mr. Harper has not and will not take part in discussions or votes related to any transaction involving Naturaland Trust while he remains a member of Naturaland Trust's Board.

Bryant Harrison is an adjoining landowner to a property owned by the King family being proposed for a conservation easement via Upstate Forever. Mr. Harrison was unaware that his neighbor was considering an easement and while he has no familial or business relationship with the King's, upon learning as a member of the Grants Committee (**April 11, 2023**) that the Kings were considering an easement, he has not taken part in the discussion or vote related to the transaction. Additionally, as **Mr. Harrison's wife** is a member of the Board of Directors of **Upstate Forever**, an entity that from time-to-time presents grant requests before the Trust, he will not take part in discussions or vote related to any transaction involving Upstate Forever while his wife remains a member of Upstate Forever's Board. Finally, Mr. Harrison is a member of the Board of Directors of the **SC Farm Bureau Land Trust**, should this new entity have any projects before the Trust, he will not take part in discussions or vote related to any transaction involving the SC Farm Bureau Land Trust.