



Green Space Advisory Committee

Chair

MICHAEL McSHANE

Vice Chair

LAWRENCE McELLYNN

Committee Members

TOM DAVIS

LAUREL RHOTEN

CARMEN AVON MANNING

TIMOTHY EVANS

T. PETER KRISTIAN

County Administrator

MICHAEL MOORE

Administration Building

Beaufort County Government

Robert Smalls Complex

100 Ribaut Road

Contact

Post Office Drawer 1228

Beaufort, South Carolina 29901-1228

(843) 255-2140

www.beaufortcountysc.gov



Green Space Advisory Committee Agenda

Friday, July 18, 2025 at 10:00 AM

2nd Floor Meeting Room

Arthur Horne Building, 104 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, SC

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF THIS MEETING HAS BEEN PUBLISHED, POSTED, AND DISTRIBUTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE SOUTH CAROLINA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**
3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
4. **REVIEW OF MINUTES**
 - A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 13, 2025 MEETING
5. **ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS**
 - A. ELECTION OF CHAIR
 - B. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR
6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

PURSUANT TO S.C. CODE SECTION 30-4-70 (A) (2): DISCUSSION OF NEGOTIATIONS INCIDENT TO PROPOSED CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FOLLOWING GREEN SPACE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS:

 - A. ***FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION:*** BUCKWALTER PUD TRACTS, BLUFFTON; POLITICAL JURISDICTION – TOWN OF BLUFFTON; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – WESTERN
 - B. ***FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION:*** SEA ISLAND PARKWAY TRACTS, BEAUFORT; POLITICAL JURISDICTION – UNINCORPORATED BEAUFORT COUNTY; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – EASTERN
 - C. ***FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION:*** MESSICK TRACTS, BEAUFORT; POLITICAL JURISDICTION – CITY OF BEAUFORT; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – EASTERN
7. **MATTERS ARISING OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION**
8. **OTHER BUSINESS**
 - A. UPDATE ON CHELSEA TRACTS REIMBURSEMENT GRANT
9. **ADJOURNMENT**

MINUTES

Green Space Advisory Committee

June 13, 2025, 10:00 AM, Multi-Purpose Room, Bluffton Branch Library, 120 Palmetto Way, Bluffton

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Tom Davis
Timothy Evans
T. Peter Kristian

Carmen Avon Manning
Larry McElynn, Vice Chair
Michael McShane, Chair

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Laurel Rhoten

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chuck Atkinson, Assistant County Administrator, Development/Recreation
Mark Davis, Green Space Program Manager, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department
Christina Bryant, Green Space Program Planner, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department
Graeme Philp, Attorney, Graybill, Lansche & Vinzani

GUESTS PRESENT:

Kate Schaefer, Director of Land Protection, Beaufort County Open Land Trust
Ben Brown, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Town of Hilton Head Island
Felicia Roth, Director of Compliance and Contracts, Town of Bluffton
Kevin Icard, Director of Planning and Community Development, Town of Bluffton
Larry Toomer, Mayor, Town of Bluffton
Dan Wood, Council Member, Town of Bluffton
Members of Rose Hill Community and other neighborhoods

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair McShane called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF THIS MEETING HAS BEEN PUBLISHED, POSTED, AND DISTRIBUTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE SOUTH CAROLINA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:

Chair McShane stated that public notification of the meeting was published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chair McShane offered to amend the agenda, allowing for public comment to be held at the beginning of the meeting. Motion made by Sen. Davis and seconded by Peter Kristian. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

REVIEW OF MINUTES – MAY 16, 2025:

Tim Evans asked to amend the minutes to reflect a more accurate number for waterfront mileage for the Chelsea Tract. Peter Kristian made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Sen. Davis seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT (REGARDING BUCKWALTER PUD APPLICATION):

Tony LaMartina, Rose Hill community, spoke about the importance of the wetlands and the wildlife in the parcels. He asked the committee to please absorb the Foothills property without any commercial rights.

Chuck Valentino, The Lowcountry Bike Walk Advocate Group, said he would like the committee to approve the Green Space application for passive park use.

Carol Weir, Town of Bluffton resident, supports the Green Space application. She said that the people need that open space. It was thought that area was preserved and everyone was surprised to find it is not.

Mike Hagen, Rose Hill community, believes in the conservation purpose of the Green Space initiative but said that putting a 80-foot road easement through the property is a misuse of funds that are intended to create green space and not new paths for highways.

Joy Coe, Rose Hill community, said she would like to preserve the many species of wildlife in the tract, probably the only wildlife corridor left in Bluffton. She said there are no other properties purchased in Bluffton with Green Space funds and would like the committee to approve this even with the road easement problem. She hopes that if the property can be preserved as green space, then maybe the Town would agree to just put a gravel road in the easement and allow it to be bike paths and recreation.

An unidentified guest stood and asked for a show of hands in support of what Mike Hagen and Joy Coe just said. Chair McShane clarified for the record that support means supporting the Town of Bluffton's application for acquisition of the Buckwalter Tract by Green Space dollars. The woman added "without a road going through it." Chair McShane said the Green Space committee can make note of that, however it is not their purview to restrict it in that regard.

With permission to respond, Joy said she believed the road is the lesser of two evils. If the property is not purchased with Green Space, it's probably going to become a road with development. But if it's preserved, hopefully the Town can be swayed to not put in a road.

Chair McShane said he believed the issue of the road had been heard and would like to move the conversation forward. He then asked if there were any other comments to be made.

Anne Chabrier, Westbury Park, said she knows so many young families with kids that would love to bike to get to places safely. Citing hospitals being built on Buckwalter and all the people that are going to have jobs there, she said that if there are safe walkways and bike routes from Buck Island to Buckwalter, so many people would take advantage of that. When Chair McShane asked her if she was offering support for the Town's application for Green Space, she replied yes.

Diane Shipe, Rose Hill community, said she has walked the whole property and knows it has a big wetlands area. When there are heavy rains, the properties that border them are flooded. She

understands that the committee can't say there can't be a road, but wants the property to remain wetlands only. She supports the Town of Bluffton's application, but only without a road.

Tony LaMartina came forward again and said he understands that it's not the purview of the committee regarding the road but doesn't understand how a road can get built if Green Space buys the property in total.

Sen. Davis responded by saying that the land, as it exists as fee simple, is owned by Foothills and there is of record a dedicated easement held by the Town of Bluffton but benefits third parties. As a matter of law, Green Space cannot demand to buy the whole thing because of the third parties who have rights in that interest of land. Referring back to what Joy Coe said about the lesser of two evils, Sen. Davis remarked that there are two scenarios in his opinion. Green Space buys the entire tract and puts covenants on it in perpetuity to prevent development and preserve the wetlands. Such things as bike paths, public parks and connectivity to other areas can be added, knowing that the easement is there. Or, Green Space doesn't buy it and a developer comes in and uses development rights to put in around 600 units of residential and 839,000 sf of commercial.

Mr. LaMartina said he doesn't understand how the road is an issue if it's being used as a bargaining tool in negotiations between the School District and the Town of Bluffton regarding the Willow Run property.

Sen. Davis said that as a real estate lawyer, he sees a tract of land and there is an existing easement that certain parties have rights to, pursuant to the development agreement amendments. He said this is a complex, inter-related thing. There are a series of amendments to the PUD, various financial obligations assigned in regard to building the road, certain conditions precedent that have to happen before those obligations are triggered, there is the Willow Run property. He views the purpose of this meeting as a way to educate himself to all those things, so that the committee is able to collectively make a recommendation to County Council. County Council will ultimately be the ones to decide what to do. He believes the committee's role is to build as good of a record as possible to identify all the interests, all the options, so that County Council has the benefit of that due diligence by them.

With no further comments, Chair McShane explained the committee's review process to all the guests. An application is considered in order to bring a recommendation to Council to give permission to do due diligence. It does not mean a project will actually go through. It will come back to Council after due diligence is completed with a recommendation to move forward with, or deny, the grant application.

NEW APPLICATIONS:

CONSERVATION EASEMENT APPLICATION: TURNER TRACT, SAINT HELENA ISLAND; POLITICAL JURISDICTION – UNINCORPORATED BEAUFORT COUNTY; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – EASTERN

Referring to the map displayed on the tv screen, Mark Davis introduced the Turner Tract as a conservation easement application located on St. Helena Island. He spoke about the connectivity to existing conservation efforts and the multiple funding partners offered.

Kate Schaefer, on behalf of The Open Land Trust (applicant), gave a brief introduction to the organization. She said they are an accredited land trust, so once they entertain a conservation easement, it cannot be changed or extinguished in any way except through condemnation by a government entity. Because other organizations have conservation in their name, she wanted to remind everyone of those qualities that the Open Land Trust and the other 24 accredited land trusts in South Carolina are very proud of and work very hard to uphold.

Returning to the Turner Tract, Kate described the characteristics of the property, its high conservation value, and the funding partnerships. The landowner is donating value and asking consideration between 30-40% of appraised easement value. Application is also being made to The State Conservation Bank by their July 31 deadline for 30% of easement value. For disclosure, Chair McShane said that he serves as chairman of The South Carolina Conservation Bank and will see this application in that capacity later this summer.

Vice Chair McElynn asked Kate what dollar value is being sought. Kate replied that though a final appraisal is not required at this stage in the Green Space application, she expects around \$150,000-200,000 from the Green Space program.

Carmen Avon Manning said she thinks it's a great project and likes that it is 128 acres. Kate said that since it's one of the larger properties remaining on St. Helena, The Open Land Trust is happy to help protect it.

With no other comments or questions, Chair McShane asked for a motion. Motion made by Tim Evans to move forward with a recommendation for due diligence and seconded by Peter Kristian. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Addressing the guests present, Chair McShane said the committee's recommendation goes to the Natural Resources Committee of Council. This committee will take that recommendation and act on it. That gives the Green Space Committee the green light to do due diligence and come back to Council with a final recommendation after due diligence.

Vice Chair McElynn added that he serves on the Natural Resources Committee and is also a member of County Council, so he participates in all these steps.

CORRIDOR PROTECTION APPLICATION: CAMPBELL TRACTS, YEMASSEE; POLITICAL JURISDICTION - UNINCORPORATED BEAUFORT COUNTY; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – NORTHERN

Mark Davis introduced the Campbell Tracts and said that though this is not the first application to the Green Space Program for corridor protection, it is a really good example of one. He gave a general description of the property and noted the utility line that cuts through one section of it.

Kate Schaefer, on behalf of The Open Land Trust (applicant), spoke about the parcels' location as an iconic entrance to Beaufort County, connectivity to existing conserved properties, and the benefits of protecting the road and river corridors along them. She said the landowner is looking for a partnership around 40-50% of appraised easement value. An application would also be made to the State Bank after an appraisal is completed during due diligence.

Referring to the map and photos displayed on the tv, Kate pointed out the powerline and said that even though a portion of it cuts within the 250 foot buffer, she does not think it violates the intent of the ordinance nor is it a visual threat to the benefit of protecting the corridor.

Chair McShane noted for everyone that the transmission line comes from Yemassee and powers all of Beaufort, Lady's Island, the Air Station, Parris Island, etc. He also mentioned that Dominion has a program that may allow doing some things under the power line to encourage wildlife, pollinators, etc, and offered to facilitate looking into possible grants.

Tim Evans said that from an easement perspective this is a high traffic, high value, very iconic entrance into Beaufort County and likes the project.

Carmen Avon Manning said she is happy that this is a little bigger property and that it's going to be contiguous. However, after seeing the submitted photos and not being able to visit the site yet, she questioned the significance of the area.

Chair McShane responded by saying that he has land interest in that area and when he was chairman of DNR, he fought with the Secretary of Transportation to protect those live oaks when improvements to the area were being planned. Originally, it was going to be an intersection with a traffic light but turned into a roundabout with an overpass that saved every one of those live oaks. So, yes it is an iconic entrance.

Speaking to Carmen, Tim Evans admitted that the photo does not show the extent of the live oaks located in a triangular section where the highway splits. He said the overpass has also been planted so it's not just mowed grass there.

Peter Kristian asked Kate what the cost might be even though no appraisal had been made yet. She could not say, but Chair McShane said the committee has comparables acquired relatively recently that would put fee simple around \$10,000 an acre. Recommending a standard of about 40%, he said the easement value might be \$4000 an acre and then reminded the committee that the Green Space Program would not pay 100% of that. There are other sources and the committee has made it very clear to Council that they are going to leverage their dollars.

Vice Chair McElynn commented that Parker's would love to put a gas station there, so this project is a much better idea. Kate added that the only thing keeping Parker's from putting a gas station in this area is the fact that it is zoned T2R in Beaufort County which says gas stations can't be within 3 radial miles of existing gas stations. The Sheldon Corner store is 2.7 miles away.

Chair McShane said that the public should know that all the road frontage from the ramp onto Hwy 17 all the way to the Combahee River is protected. That's why it's the entrance into Beaufort County – it's not all commercial through there. He then asked the committee if there was a motion to move the project forward with a recommendation for due diligence. Motion was made by Vice Chair McElynn and seconded by Carmen Avon Manning.

Chair McShane asked Carmen if she had any discussion. She said if this area is so iconic, then maybe the committee could look into a really nice sign that welcomed people to Beaufort County. Chair McShane said the committee could look into that.

With no other discussion, Chair McShane asked for a vote. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT APPLICATION: SIMMONS TRACTS, HILTON HEAD ISLAND;
POLITICAL JURISDICTION - TOWN OF HILTON HEAD; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – SOUTHERN**

Mark Davis introduced the Simmons Tracts, an application for a conservation easement on Hilton Head Island. Referring to the map displayed on the tv screen, Mark identified the property and pointed out the existing development patterns. He said the goal is to not develop this property and preserve it with a conservation easement as the tool versus an outright fee simple purchase and ownership by a government entity.

Kate Schaefer, on behalf of The Open Land Trust (applicant), provided some background information on the two properties listed in the application. She said the parcels are important because they retain family lands on Hilton Head which are in short supply and are representative of what Hilton Head used to be. Placing a conservation easement on them is an opportunity to reduce growth, to better align the land use with the infrastructure, to protect family land, and to have a partnership with a municipality. She thanked Ben Brown and his team with the Town of Hilton Head for connecting the Open Land Trust with the landowner.

Ben Brown (Town of Hilton Head) then addressed the committee. He said this application is exciting for the Town because it would be Hilton Head's first conservation easement request to the Green Space Program. He had an opportunity to speak with the trustee of the property, Palmer Simmons, several times. Mr. Simmons has been receiving unsolicited offers for the property because it's entitled for up to 66 units. It is very important to him to keep this property in the family. This application has been well received by the Town of Hilton Head because it preserves open space, cultural heritage, as well as natural resources. Having lived for the last twenty-five years within two miles of the property, Ben said this is what Hilton Head used to look like, and he loves the idea that it can be preserved. He then thanked the committee for their consideration.

Peter Kristian confirmed with Kate and Ben that there are two existing structures on the parcels and asked if another structure was requested. Kate replied that the easement would permit two total structures.

Vice Chair McElynn asked for the names of the closest roads to the property other than Spanish Wells Road. With a GIS map displayed on the tv, it was noted that the Cross Island Parkway and Marshland Road provide access to the property in addition to Spanish Wells Road.

Tim Evans said that 9.5 acres doesn't sound like a lot, especially in areas of northern Beaufort County where he lives and works, but 9.5 acres on Hilton Head is huge.

Chair McShane said that he hoped in time the legacy of the Green Space Program on Hilton Head is going to reflect on these activities. These truly are opportunities that will never be around again - when it's gone, it's gone forever. Mitchelville, this tract, some of the other tracts that the committee is working on with the Town are like that. He then inquired about when the appraisal was completed on the parcels. Ben Brown said that it was done in the first quarter of this year, and the property was appraised for \$5.62 million with an easement value of

\$3,090,000. Chair McShane said that was a little higher than 40% of fair market value, but he's been seeing that in high-density urban areas across the state, so he's not shocked by that figure. It gives the committee the chance to negotiate with the landowner and the Town. Ben also said that because of all the unsolicited offers, Palmer Simmons is concerned that his grandchildren may sell the property at some point.

Chair McShane said it was clear there was some urgency here, so the committee will facilitate that. He asked for a motion to move forward with a recommendation for due diligence. Motion was made by Peter Kristian and seconded by Tim Evans. Peter commented that he was very pleased to see the Town of Hilton Head working with Kate and partnering so that the Green Space dollars can be maximized. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

EXISTING APPLICATIONS/OLD BUSINESS:

FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION: BUCKWALTER PUD TRACTS, BLUFFTON; POLITICAL JURISDICTION – TOWN OF BLUFFTON; GEOGRAPHIC REGION – WESTERN

Mark Davis explained that Buckwalter PUD application had already gone through the initial review process with the committee and was now being brought back for additional discussion because of new and updated information.

Chair McShane proposed that the applicant, Town of Bluffton, summarize again what they are looking for in the application and then the committee would discuss how they'd like to proceed.

Addressing the committee, Felicia Roth with the Town of Bluffton introduced herself and gave some background information about the parcels, totaling about 240 acres. They are not contiguous - there is a 55-acre parcel in between them but all are located in the Buckwalter Planned Unit Development. She said an application to the Green Space Program was made in the fall and since then, they now have a Phase I Environmental Assessment report, updated appraisals on the two properties, and a clean title report.

Responding to questions, Chair McShane reminded the committee that the application is for a fee simple purchase and the Town is requesting 100% funding from Green Space. When Peter Kristian asked about any partners, Chair McShane replied that there were none at this time.

Sen. Davis asked Felicia Roth to talk a little bit about the north-south road easement – how it came to existence, who owns it, who are the benefitting parcels that have a right to that easement, and what are the obligations or conditions precedent to that road being constructed.

Referring to the survey displayed on the tv, Felicia pointed out the relocatable easement. She said relocatable means that its location is not yet fixed. It was negotiated as part of the Buckwalter Planned Unit Development agreement, created in 2000. The easement is specifically mentioned in the ninth amendment to that agreement, dated 2008. At the time, the land was privately held, and this easement was donated to the Town as a potential road right-of-way in exchange for other property development rights. Felicia said that at one time this area was one parcel owned by one landowner. As it was subdivided, there became multiple parties and multiple legal obligations. The Town was given the right-of-way so that if the east-west corridor known as 5B were to ever be constructed, there would be an additional north-south access to it up to Hwy 278. The easement has obligations with it as to who would build it and when it would

need to be built, however, the road would not be required by law to be built until other things happened. It is rather complex. She pointed out the southern terminus of the right-of-way and how it continues through the 55-acre parcel that is not part of the application. She said the Town would not be interested in building a road to nowhere. The nature of it is relocatable because the designated uses of the other privately held properties are unknown.

Chair McShane asked if the estimated development figures of 650 residential units and up to 850,000 sf of commercial space were correct for the properties. Felicia said they were correct for the larger parcel, but her notes included the upland areas only which would allow for about 697,000 sf for commercial and 400-550 residential units. So, if the Town is not able to buy this larger parcel and someone who has development rights acquires the land, then they could build.

Sen. Davis asked if it was within the Town's discretion to extinguish the road easement, would the other parties involved have to agree? Felicia said the Town would have to seek authorization/permission from other parties who have legal obligations. And because the right-of-way was a donation to the Town, it would require a public hearing process. She said the Town has received something of value in exchange for something that was given away, and it would be quite complex to unwind.

Sen. Davis then asked about the ownership of the 55-acre Parcel 5C. Felicia said it is owned by an entity called Inland Bluffton, LLC and there are no pending development applications for it.

Chair McShane invited the Mayor of the Town of Bluffton and his team to speak about their vision for the two properties on the application.

Mayor Larry Toomer said that as hard as it is to believe, it is the goal of Council, and his, to reduce development anywhere they can. In his opinion, mistakes were made 20-25 years ago, and they see it every day and are trying to correct that. There was a time when Bluffton was one square mile. The mayor said he started first grade in Bluffton in 1964, so he's seen quite a few changes. Their goal is to reduce development and an example of that is the Town's spending of \$2.5 million on the Willow tract to get back what was given to that property 25 years ago. If the Town gets funding from the Green Space Program to acquire the two properties, there will never be any residential or commercial development.

Chair McShane asked the mayor if he and his council understood that if Green Space were to make a grant for their application, there would be grant restrictions, a legal obligation that would hold the Town and future councils to what the grant stipulates. Mayor Toomer said they understood. He said that if just the Town tries to protect these parcels, future councils could come back and do something different. So that's why the Town is asking for the grant – they want the Green Space Program's name on it to make sure that it's always going to be open space.

Carmen Avon Manning asked for clarification on the development rights because it was her understanding after attending one of the Town's workshops that there was none associated with the Foothills property. Felicia Roth responded by saying that when the property was subdivided, the developer very shrewdly kept the development rights in their pocket and transferred this land to a conservation trust who did not put a conservation easement on it and took the tax break. So, this property is being conveyed without development rights inherent to it. However, there exist many development rights within the Buckwalter Planned Unit

Development, so should someone other than the Town purchase this land and they have development rights, they can apply them to these properties and develop.

Chair McShane asked Felicia if in the scenario that he described earlier in which the grant is made, could it extinguish the 650 units so that it can't be used elsewhere in the PUD? She said that with the purchase of these two properties in fee, there are no development rights. It is the conservation easement and any covenants and restrictions that would prevent the development. But a third party who owns development rights in Buckwalter can use them any other place in Buckwalter.

Carmen then inquired about the development rights on the Willow Run tract that the Mayor alluded to earlier. Mayor Toomer responded by saying the Town of Bluffton's goal is to retire the development rights on that property.

Vice Chair McElynn said that he appreciated Mayor Toomer's strong commitment to no development on that property but the road at the bottom of the property still needed to be addressed. Felicia Roth confirmed the road in question as the proposed extension to the Bluffton Parkway known as 5B. She said that it is not the subject of today's application, nor would it be impacted by the conservation easement. The relocatable road easement in the parcels listed in the Town's application does not connect to 5B.

Peter Kristian said he appreciated the mayor asking the Green Space Program to protect the properties from future town councils. He then asked if the Town had partnered with anyone else. Felicia answered that an application to the State Conservation Bank had been made, and a decision would be known around July. Chair McShane asked her if the Town would be willing to accept an accredited conservation organization as a partner, so that not only would the grant restrictions from Green Space be applied, but a third-party conservation organization would be layered on top as well. She replied they are absolutely amenable to that as long as the covenants and restrictions do not contradict themselves. She said the Town already has property with similar restrictions on it like the 37-acre New Riverside Barn Park which was developed in part with grant money from the National Park Service.

Peter Kristian made further comment by saying that there is a road to nowhere right now and the only reason for possible development of that road is if the Bluffton Parkway realignment takes place sometime in the future. Felicia agreed and said if the Parkway is never built then the connector won't either. Responding to his question about why other interested parties would care in having the connector built if no development was going to take place at either end of it, Felicia said that if the Town can purchase the properties, then they significantly reduce the value of any commercial rights that might remain on adjacent parcels. Saying she is not an appraiser and just offering her opinion, Felicia remarked that if the Town puts the two parcels listed in their application in conservation, thereby eliminating a giant commercial strip through there, then that might reduce the value of a third party who might attain commercial development rights. Peter said the only development that could take place would be that 55-acre parcel that separates the two properties.

Speaking about whether the legal obligations with the connector could be unwound, Felicia said she did not know. It would take a lot of time to investigate whether they could get all the parties

to the table and get them to agree to extinguish the easement. She is concerned that the Town would run out of time to make these purchases because if they do not close on the parcels by the end of this calendar year, then it will be on the open market.

Peter Kristian asked what development rights are associated with the 55-acre parcel. Felicia said she didn't have that information with her but could provide that to the committee later.

Sen. Davis said he appreciated what Mayor Toomer had to say and it sounded like the Town would be amenable to having covenants overlaid on top of the grant restrictions. In hearing the discussion with others in regard to bike paths and parks and the ability of the public to enjoy it, he asked if the Town, as the fee owner, would be willing to enter into some sort of memorandum of understanding with PRT or some other similar entity which would facilitate and provide assistance to some federal funding that state agencies can grant. He understands that the grant application itself restricts the land, but he is trying to provide assurance to the public. Mayor Toomer said that is a decision that would have to be made by council, but he does not believe there would be any issue. Responding to Chair McShane's question about having an external partner, the mayor said the Town would welcome it. Dan Wood, Town of Bluffton council member, also agreed.

Felicia Roth said that next year the Town is going to undergo master planning for parks. She would love it if these two properties could be acquired and Town Council authorized her to put them into the master plan for a 200-acre park.

Chair McShane asked Graeme Philp, attorney for the Green Space Program, if he had any questions or comments. He had none.

Carmen Avon Manning said it's great to preserve these lands since they are in the Rose Dhu Creek watershed, an area which in 2018 was already 20% impervious. She visited the site after a storm in January and said it's true that the backyards flooded, and some of the streets as well. So, it's very important to protect that area without any kind of pavement and that includes an 80-foot easement with a 3-lane highway. In her attendance at Town meetings and workshops, Carmen said she is concerned with the Town's insistence on having the Parkway extension easement, 5B, shown on all developer plans. She would like to see the north-south connector road as only gravel and asked if the other interested parties of the connector could be listed. Felicia said they could. Chair McShane offered that if the committee chose to move forward, it may be part of their motion to have that as part of the negotiations with the Town. He said they still have to do negotiations on how much money to put in and on how the grant will eliminate the possibility forever of the 600-plus units and almost a million square feet of commercial space on any of those tracts.

Sen Davis inquired about the process of the negotiations and asked if it was the purview of the Green Space committee. Chair McShane said he thinks County Council is looking to the committee to bring a recommendation that would include those negotiations, and then Council would be the one to take action to accept that recommendation.

After asking Chair McShane for an opportunity to respond to Carmen's comment about the Town's insistence on showing the 5B extension road, Felicia said the Town has a legal obligation to ensure that any potential infrastructure is shown on developers' plans so that it is not

forgotten and conflicting uses are not proposed over it. It must be shown and the setbacks appropriately denoted. Mark Davis added that by law during development review, if an easement has been recorded, especially in a development agreement, staff must make the developer show recorded easements on development plans.

Lastly, Carmen referred to the County ordinance, Section 38-195-C that states “the extent to which the acquisition will result in the reduction of vehicle miles traveled and reduce the need for future roadway improvements.” She asked if the committee, knowing there is an easement and possibility of building a three-lane road, could vote on it.

Chair McShane asked if the committee had heard enough to decide about going forward. He said he’d accept a motion moving forward on the grant as applied with the covenants and restrictions to be negotiated with the committee’s legal counsel as a recommendation to County Council with encouragement of a third-party conservation easement layered on top. Peter Kristian asked if Green Space would be reimbursed for any funding that the Town received in its application to the State Bank and Chair McShane replied that is how they’ve been doing it.

Sen. Davis said that he would attempt to make a motion. He offered that the committee recommend approval of the application but subject to the negotiation between the County and the Town of certain covenants in addition to the grant restrictions or with a qualified entity like the Open Land Trust. He added that there also be an agreement by the Town which would be negotiated with the County as part of its approval to have an understanding or agreement with PRT regarding park amenities and application that the state agency can make to the federal government for some of those park amenities. Sen. Davis said that in light of the concerns expressed, even though the penny itself would have restrictions, he feels it is necessary to layer these things on top and to address some of the comments made about the need for amenities and recreation.

After Peter Kristian seconded the motion, Sen. Davis asked if it would be in the committee’s purview as recommending to County Council actions to encourage acquisition of the 55-acre parcel, understanding that it’s not part of this application. Chair McShane agreed that it is important, but believes Sen. Davis’s motion, if approved, brings that issue back to the committee for final approval and negotiations before going to recommendation to County Council.

With no other discussion, a vote was taken. The motion was approved unanimously.

Felicia Roth asked Chair McShane for clarification on the motion. She said the Town has an excellent relationship with Parks, Recreation, and Tourism and understands their role and working with federal entities but was concerned with PRT’s ability to deliver and then torpedoing everything. Chair McShane said he thinks the motion gives the Town latitude. The committee is going to make a good faith effort to have PRT review what resources and expertise they offer. Time is of the essence. The committee’s next meeting is on July 18th, so he would like for this to come back then with specifics on what has been achieved.

OTHER BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION OF LETTER RECEIVED FROM TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND REGARDING BROAD CREEK MARINA

Mark Davis said that the Beaufort County Administrator received a letter from the Town of Hilton Head regarding a prior project which the Green Space Advisory Committee had reviewed and recommended to Council not to move forward. The letter asks for possible reconsideration and if so, whether a new application would be required.

Chair McShane said he would take a motion that the committee would accept a new application from the Town of Hilton Head. Motion made by Tim Evans and seconded by Peter Kristian. Vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Chair McShane asked each committee member for any other comments. Carmen Avon Manning said that the committee has reviewed twenty-two applications so far, and of those, eight have been from the Town of Hilton Head. She commended the Town for wanting to preserve lands but wanted everyone in the room to know that part of the committee's restraint on using the little over \$100 million is to use it equitably.

Chair McShane said that just as a reminder the Chelsea Tracts will be on the County Council agenda for the meeting on July 14th. For the benefit of the guests present, Chair McShane explained that The Nature Conservancy negotiated an acquisition of the Chelsea Tracts on Hwy 462 which otherwise would have put 6000 units and additional vehicles onto 462 and Hwy 170 in Okatie. The committee is recommending to Council to help The Nature Conservancy who went out on a limb and borrowed \$28 million at today's rates to close on that transaction. He said they are going to try and help them by reducing the debt with a reimbursable grant that the Department of Defense will ultimately put in because the property protects their air space. Jasper County, Beaufort County, and the State will bring dollars to match that.

ADJOURNMENT:

Peter Kristian made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sen. Davis seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Minutes compiled by Christina Bryant, Green Space Program Planner, Beaufort County Planning & Zoning Department