

# MINUTES

## Green Space Advisory Committee

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*December 6, 2024, 9:30 AM, Executive Conference Room, Beaufort County Administration Building*

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Vice Chair Howard called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. Vice Chair Howard confirmed with Mark Davis that public notification of the meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Tom Davis  
Timothy Evans  
Alice Howard, Vice-Chair  
T. Peter Kristian  
Carmen Avon Manning  
Michael McShane, Chair  
Laurel Rhoten

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Brittanee Bishop, Program and Finance Manager, Beaufort County Engineering Department  
Mark Davis, Green Space Program Manager, Beaufort County Planning and Zoning Department  
Amanda Flake, Natural Resource Planner, Beaufort County Planning and Zoning Department  
Brian Hulbert, Deputy County Attorney  
Rob Merchant, Director, Beaufort County Planning and Zoning Department  
Stefanie Nagid, Director, Beaufort County Passive Parks Department  
Juliana Smith, Long Range Planner, Beaufort County Planning and Zoning Department  
Graeme Philp, Graybill, Lansche & Vinzani (virtual)

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Jerry Alcock, Weichert Realtors  
Ben Brown, Senior Advisor to the Town Manager, Town of Hilton Head Island  
Kelli Brunson, Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation  
Lee Gray, representative for Messick Tract  
Pat Harvey-Palmer, representative for Messick Tract  
Kevin Icard, Director of Planning and Community Development, Town of Bluffton  
Bob Jones, Weichert Realtors

Felicia Roth, Director of Compliance and Contracts, Town of Bluffton  
Kate Schaefer, Director of Land Protection, Beaufort County Open Land Trust  
Brian Warner, Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation  
Jessie White, South Coast Director, Coastal Conservation League

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Senator Davis made a motion to approve the agenda. Laurel Rhoten seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 15, 2024:**

Peter Kristian made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 15 meeting. Tim Evans seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Vice Chair Howard asked everyone attending the meeting to introduce themselves.

**FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION: BUCKFIELD TRACTS, YEMASSEE:**

Mark Davis presented the initial staff summary evaluation using the computer screen. Mark said the Open Land Trust (OLT) is the applicant and that there are a lot of partnerships involved in this application including the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The larger project as a whole includes property in Jasper and Hampton counties. Mark used a map to describe the larger project. There is a portion that the EDC is purchasing within the county and the Green Space Program, along with other partners, are looking to purchase the remaining acreage within the county which would be owned by the State Forestry Commission. Mark said this project could result in the combination of responsible commerce park development and environmental preservation.

Chair McShane arrived at the meeting.

Mark said the County has been working with the EDC for about 2 ½ years, as the County's long-range plan calls for commerce in this general area where infrastructure such as rail and its proximity to major highways exists. The challenge has been how can we combine this with environmental stewardship. Mark stated the goal of this project should be to show how you can do commerce in an environmentally responsible way in combination with environmental preservation.

Chair McShane congratulated the economic development team, as they have demonstrated this unique collaboration between conservation interests and commerce development. Chair McShane noted that so much of this area is in forestry and that landowners depend on that to sustain their properties. Chair McShane congratulated the economic development team regarding their collaboration in working with the Department of Commerce on ways to recruit industry that is complementary to the area. We encourage them to sustain what we do—the stewardship of those properties. The state is going to invest in this as well.

The applicant, Kate Schaefer with OLT said this is a multifaceted partnership project. There are four properties involved, all in timber production, all owned by the same landowner. In total, it is 2,900 acres with 500 acres for a commerce park in the middle, located on the highest, driest, best suited place for a commerce park—being along the rail, having access to the power transmission line, etc. The surrounding land, about 2,400 acres, would be state forest, owned by the Forestry Commission. The request to the Green Space Program is for the Beaufort County portion of the site. A state grant from the Office of Resilience (EPA money), would be used for the remaining properties. All four properties would move forward together.

Kate used a map to show the adjacent protected property and said this is a critical link in the land protection greenbelt and it fulfills an economic development opportunity. Kate thanked the economic development team for their partnership. Kate said she thinks this is one of the projects that could deliver an outcome that was imagined with the creation of the Green Space Program in the first place, as it is complimentary to County growth management plans and County progress. Kate said we have had conversations with Hampton and Jasper counties as well as the Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance about the project.

Chair McShane said this project would help connect two focus areas of conservation, the southern Lowcountry and the ACE Basin. That then becomes that bridge that would connect, and that makes it one of the most unique features of anywhere in the state--that connectivity from the ACE Basin all the way to the Savannah River. And that has great natural resource value that will pay dividends to future generations in terms of water quality, water quantity, and wildlife. It bolsters why the EPA was looking at making this big grant. The fact that the Green Space Program exists, along with the fact the state had a conservation bank, made it so competitive, it was going to be difficult for EPA not to make this award.

Peter Kristian made a motion to move the application forward to the Community Services and Land Use Committee with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms, seconded by Carmen Avon Manning.

In discussion, Carmen Avon Manning said this is a great project, but my concerns are for the actual economic development. Carmen said she is not opposed to development; development is wonderful. That's how this country grew and became the great country that it is. Carmen said she likes smart development; she likes things done with a clear vision and looking twenty years ahead. So, she would encourage permeable pavements and good access--so you don't need to go back and do it again in ten years. Making sure there is enough thought put into all that. That's one concern. Secondly, Carmen said she is not quite sure of the breakdown for the money. The request for Green Space funding has a range of somewhere between 2 to 7 ½ million. How is that all being worked out?

Kate Schaefer said part of due diligence is working to determine the final value; so that's why we don't have it with dollars and cents today, and that it is a range of the per acre value. We have had appraisals done on all of the properties and so that value came from an initial

appraisal that your committee will be able to review during the due diligence period. And part of your discretion is how much money you are able to put into the project considering all of your other needs; but the request is based on a 30% minimum of the Beaufort County tracts. If you were able to put in more than 30%, that may be able to assist the closings on the other pieces and so the closings could happen sequentially. If this committee chooses to put in the full amount (you all have that flexibility, you all understandably can move a little faster than the state and feds), that may be advantageous to getting this all finished and done and then leave some of the EPA grant funds for neighboring projects. Those are the due diligence types of conversations that I hope we can have with this committee. Because this is not happening in a vacuum; there's a lot of work happening around these four properties. If Beaufort County invests here at the \$6 or \$7 million level, that allows EPA money to invest nearby and so on. It's all related, which is why there's not a specific ask at this point, because that's part of due diligence. Mark Davis noted that even if Green Space invested at the \$7 million level, that is \$7 million out of a \$25 million deal.

Chair McShane said there will be grant agreements in place to prohibit Ms. Manning's concerns.

Laurel Rhoten said she thinks this is a great collaboration, an example of what smart growth should be, so she would recommend it go forward.

Tim Evans said any time the opportunity to leverage Green Space money with federal and state money and other sources so that you see a \$25 million outcome for a \$5 million investment, is something we need to pursue further. He is in favor.

Peter Kristian said this is a great collaboration.

Chair McShane asked for a vote on the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

***FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION: NORTH WIDGEON TRACTS, OKATIE:***

Mark Davis presented the initial staff summary evaluation using the computer screen. Mark used a map to show the location of Widgeon Point, a well-loved passive park in the county and its proximity to these parcels. The North Widgeon piece has been of high interest to the Rural and Critical Program for preservation and this project will spend their last remaining funds. The applicant (OLT) is also applying to the State Conservation Bank. The application to Green Space would be to assist in the funding gap.

The applicant, Kate Schaefer said funding for this purchase, which would be a fee-simple acquisition by Beaufort County to be added to the passive parks inventory, would come from Rural and Critical. OLT has had the pleasure and honor of contracting with Beaufort County on the Rural and Critical program for the past twelve years. As you all heard, when the Green Space Committee was being established, there were some questions from the Rural and Critical board such as, what happens to us? What about the success of our program? The way

we feel about that is that the Green Space program is iterative, and it builds on the success of Rural and Critical, and makes improvements, and that's what we should all strive for every time we start something new--to build on success and to improve. And so, this is the passing of the baton from the Rural and Critical program to the Green Space Program. Understanding that it's still county taxpayer dollars in both accounts--a sales tax fund and a property tax fund. But it is a passing of the baton, a co-investment so to speak, of a property that really does mean a lot to Beaufort County residents. Widgeon Point is a phenomenal passive park and well-loved, the center of the county. This kind of crown of protected land along the Lemon Island corridor has been a key feature of Beaufort County, visually recognizable to all county residents, important from a resilience and do no harm perspective. This property was previously subdivided into seven lots. So, it adds to a protected landscape and prevents the fragmentation of a potentially developable landscape and does so in a meaningful way as far as funding partnerships are concerned.

Kate Schaefer said the Rural and Critical account has about one \$1.2 million left in it at the moment, so we have asked the Rural and Critical board to recommend due diligence which was approved by the Community Services and Land Use Committee. At this time, an appraisal has been completed, and the title work has been done. We have a title commitment on the property, which buttons up all of the things we need for the State Conservation Bank application in January. The State Conservation Bank staff have reviewed this property preliminarily and are favorable of their investment. So, we are asking for an investment from Green Space not to exceed Rural and Critical's investment.

Mark Davis pointed out this is a subdivided parcel. There is a small road here with a curb cut, so it's ready for development. This provides an opportunity to undo what should have never been done.

Carmen Avon Manning asked about the intervening property. Kate said it is below the high tide line. Chair McShane said by default, it would be state ownership.

Tim Evans made a motion to move the application forward to the Community Services and Land Use Committee with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms, seconded by Peter Kristian. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

***FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION: BEACH CITY ROAD, HILTON HEAD ISLAND:***

Mark Davis presented the initial staff summary evaluation using the computer screen. Mark noted the property is near the Mitchelville tract which has now closed. Mark used a map showing that the property is directly across the street from Mitchelville Freedom Park. You can see several prior investments that have been made to secure this corridor and protect the public park investment as well as the environmental elements.

Mark thanked Ben Brown for this application. Mark said the Town of Hilton Head realized the importance of the property. The property went up for sale and Hilton Head acted; they got it

under contract and applied to the Green Space Program. In order to meet their contract obligations, they recently closed on the property. They purchased the property for \$1.19 million and are requesting \$250,000 of Green Space funds to assist with that purchase.

Chair McShane noted this will be a reimbursable grant. Chair McShane said the reality is the Town had to move quickly because of the dynamics of the real estate transaction--before we could go through our process.

In response to a question from Senator Davis, Mark confirmed the Green Space application had been submitted before closing took place. Senator Davis replied that he has no objections to that.

Ben Brown said the Town was very excited when this property came to market. The Town Manager and I brought an application forward to our town council and they asked us to pursue the property, but the council also asked us to seek partial reimbursement from the Green Space Program. Mark Davis said the Green Space portion is about 20%.

Chair McShane said he would like to meet with the Town and OLT, as he thinks this scenario is going to repeat itself and there might be some efficiencies. We might figure out a way that we can work together that might bring some additional leverage and additional dollars.

Ben Brown said he welcomed the opportunity to meet. This has been an exceptionally exciting property. After receiving support from our Town Council, I reached out to the realtor who communicated with Miss Moultrie, who owned the property. She's a descendant of the previous owners (the Whites) that owned about 30 acres in the historic Mitchellville area. She received the property from her parents in 1981. She really had no interest in selling the property but started receiving considerable interest because of the value and because of some of the adjacent development.

Ben Brown said talking with Miss Moultrie through the realtor, I expressed that we had interest in the property. The realtor told us they had offers in hand for as much as the full asking price. So, I asked, is there something we can do? Can we put a sign on the property to memorialize the site? Miss Moultrie and her family were very interested in preserving the property. What they explained is six generations of the White family have enjoyed this property. They would like nothing more than to preserve it so that future generations could also enjoy it. And with its proximity to historic Mitchellville Freedom Park, they agreed to sell it to the Town for \$10,000 less than asking, which was less than some of their other offers.

Chair McShane said we need to capture that \$10,000. To me, that's bargain sale; that is leveraged dollars. We don't want to lose that, because that is a compelling case for some additional grants that we might be able to pursue. Chair McShane noted there are three partners right now--the seller, the Town, and Green Space.

Chair McShane asked if between this property and the sound - is that one ownership? Ben said it is not one ownership, and the Town is very sensitive, especially with the Native Island property. The Town is not in the business of seeking to acquire these properties, but when they come to market, we certainly share them with the town council.

Chair McShane said he'd like to have a future discussion with the Town, particularly where there is some interest on the state side, particularly where these families have had a long history, of developing the ability to bring voluntary negotiated compensation to conservation.

Peter Kristian made a motion to move the application forward to the Community Services and Land Use Committee with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms, seconded by Tom Davis. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Mark Davis said since the Town has already closed on the property, you can consider sending this straight to funding; we have all the due diligence.

Brian Hulbert said there is no need for due diligence since the Town has closed on it; they have done the due diligence.

In response to a question by Brian Hulbert, Mark Davis said he would support the appraisal.

Chair McShane said he just wants the Committee to be consistent in how we apply procedures. Peter Kristian amended the motion to have legal review of the due diligence that has already been done. Tom Davis seconded. The vote to approve the amended motion was unanimous.

Tim Evans commended the Town for moving rapidly on this.

***FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION: BUCKWALTER PUD TRACTS, BLUFFTON:***

Mark Davis said this is the first application from the Town of Bluffton. Mark presented the initial staff summary evaluation using the computer screen. The property is in a PUD that is subject to a development agreement, however the parcel has not been assigned development rights. The Town has stated that they are interested in purchasing the property with the assistance of the Green Space Program and preventing development rights from being assigned to the parcel.

Senator Davis confirmed that the property to the right is Rose Hill, and it is his understanding in talking to Rose Hill residents that they are very concerned with the parcel and Willow Run to the north, of being developed. So, this should be viewed favorably by those residents. Senator Davis asked if the Rose Hill residents have expressed any interest in having this preserved.

Felicia Roth with the Town of Bluffton said this has not been brought to the residents formally; we have to move quickly, as we are concerned it's about to go on the open market. In response to a question from Chair McShane, Felicia said the Town has an option on the property. Senator

Davis asked if the current owner indicated that they're prepared to proceed by soliciting bids from private parties to develop it. Felicia said yes.

Mark Davis said the property (2 parcels) is a total of approximately 240 acres. The parcel in between the two is in different ownership and is undeveloped.

Carmen Avon Manning said the PUD shows the connector road between Fording Island Road and Bluffton Parkway Phase 5B, but that's not on the map, and certainly the people at Rose Hill would not want that connector road built. In addition, the parcel between these two that you mentioned is also slated for commercial development; again, Phase 5B. In light of the recent annexation, which is the beginning of 5B, there is a lot of concern that this is all just a play to get 5B done. And what will the town do? The town could always condemn the land, and put in this connector road between the two, because now you've got the school purchase up at the top—Willow Run. So, there are a lot of questions on this. If you were telling me that Green Space is going to preserve this and it puts it to bed and also puts 5B to bed, I'd say great; but I think there's a lot of questions that have to be answered and I hate to be doing it in a rush. I'd like some confirmation on that.

Senator Davis said, Carmen makes a good point, in that the ghost of 5B is kind of related. But the way I view it is, if you take that large tract of land off the books for a potential allocation of units in residential development, I think you're actually diminishing the prospects of a 5B, because you won't have that dense amount of development to be served. And as I understand it, the easement for that connector road from US 278 on down to the 5B planning, is currently existing; that it's of record and is plated, and so it's not as if it's being created here; it exists now. Senator Davis said it's an important point that we're talking about easements that currently exist; it's not being created as part of this proposal. I think that's material. I just think it gives a lot of comfort to the adjacent communities in terms of its not going to be densely developed. I think that long term, it diminishes the prospect of 5B being economically needed.

Chair McShane asked, is there some room though, that at some point a road could go through the parcels? Senator Davis said I think that exists now in that there's a plated easement for the road. Whether or not that becomes a reality, I think that depends on the demand that's created in the area for roads. So, if you're taking land off the books, I think that diminishes potential demand.

Brittanee Bishop said our Metropolitan Planning Organization, LATS, is working on a study of Bluffton Parkway as a whole, and they're also studying a connection of Bluffton Parkway all the way to Interstate 95. There's been preliminary numbers on what 5B, and the north-south connector can do. Preliminarily, it is showing a significant decrease of traffic on other areas of Bluffton Parkway, but we're still waiting on that final data. We're still about a year out from having that plan adopted. A public meeting will be held on February 25 at Buckwalter Recreation Center. Brittanee said she thinks it's great for purchasing the land for the land use reasoning, but when it comes to the overall transportation network, if it's deemed that 5B



and/or the north connector is something that is warranted and needed in this study, then future discussion will need to occur; but right now, the County has spoken out loud of our opposition to 5B. But LATS needs to do their due diligence and study what it could do for the overall network.

Chair McShane said, if some future road there would be developed, if we were to make this grant, there would have to be mitigation for the fact that we put in Green Space funds.

Mark Davis said the application does say that the existing easement, which accounts for approximately 10% of the total acreage, would be purchased by Bluffton as a part of their application. So, Bluffton is not asking Green Space to pay for the easement acreage.

Senator Davis said we talked at the last meeting about the utility of having access routes for the public to get in to enjoy it. Is the nature of that easement such that, even if it isn't needed for a connector between US 278 and 5B, can it be utilized to provide the public with access to this land as a passive park? Brittane Bishop said she would need to review the easement along with the development agreement.

Felicia Roth with the town said it is an 80' ROW easement. She said these particular parcels did have an appraisal last year, and together, they were appraised at \$2.2 million, which reflects the fact that they do not currently have development rights associated with them. So, if this were to go to open market, the buyer would pay for the land and then pay separately for any development rights. Any private owner who hosts those rights could sell those, so we are excited about the fact that it's appraised at \$2.2 million, which makes it a wonderful opportunity for us to procure them.

Felicia Roth said she also wanted to point out that the proposed easement for the extension of Bluffton Parkway does **not** traverse either of these parcels. Felicia said she supposed it could be condemned, but right now this is in private ownership, so the procurement by the Town of these parcels to put in conservation would not enable 5B.

Felicia Roth said one of the reasons for the purchase (other than the urgency that we think it will go to market) is to help mitigate flooding. You may recall in Hurricane Debbie, that we had a massive flooding event particularly in these neighborhoods—Shell Hall, Hampton Hall, and The Farm. And so, it might seem that by leaving this natural, we would help mitigate future flooding events. But we can do better than that if we are allowed to put in our access road for people to get to the property and get to a park or whatever we might put in here. We can also install stormwater infrastructure to allow for aggregation of inundation areas and actually improve the stormwater runoff through this preserved parcel. And I think that's going to make a big difference to Shell Hall and The Farm if we're allowed to do that. This is in the May River watershed which as you know is the crown jewel of Bluffton. We do everything that we can to preserve it, and there have been elevated fecal coliform levels in the May River. It has caused

certain areas to be closed to shellfish harvesting, which of course has impacts on our economy. So, we have every interest in preserving these in order to help with that runoff.

Felicia Roth showed a conceptual map of development of the property. She said if this were to go to market, she wanted to show the impact of what it could be from a residential perspective. She pointed out the amount of impervious surface that would be added. Felicia said the Town has a tremendous sense of urgency about this; we do not want these parcels to go to open market.

Felicia Roth said the concept plan does not show the easement, as it is a relocatable easement. Mark Davis noted they can move it. Felicia said that it could be negotiated. Chair McShane said if we move forward on this with due diligence, I'd like to see about the prospects of how that can be done.

Peter Kristian asked if there is a range of what the development possibilities are; how many units are potentially on this tract. Kevin Icard with the Town said he had their GIS staff lay out the property with typical lots of 7,500 SF and a road network. This is not a concept that has ever been proposed; this is meant solely to get a conceptual number. Kevin referred to the conceptual layout and said about 720 residential units could potentially be built on that site. In the Buckwalter PUD, there are still over 2,000 dwelling units that have not been constructed yet, so there is an opportunity for someone to develop 720 units on this site; that's roughly six units per acre. The top end could be more than 720 units. There is also the potential of 250,000 SF of commercial development.

Kevin Icard said the Town is working with the School District to purchase the development rights for property that we refer to as Willow Run-260 dwelling units, 100 acres of commercial development, and two 250-unit hotels of value. So, the Town is trying to take development off as well. The Town would get a small portion of land near US 278 near Saint Gregory the Great church for potential affordable housing. So, we're trying to move pieces around and then develop in an economic and environmental way.

Carmen Avon Manning asked, as part of the school purchase, doesn't that include the connector from Fording Island Road? Kevin said there is a connection to the north-south connector, and we're bringing this in front of Town Council to help the school to alleviate the needs. It's a very complicated process. As part of the Buckwalter development agreement, for whoever has the Willow Run tract, for them to be able to start construction for development, they must build a portion of that roadway.

In response to a question from Carmen Avon Manning, Kevin said there is a frontage road called Cassidy Drive that's proposed from the Vineyard assisted living facility on Buckwalter Parkway, to connect behind the Lux facility on US 278. This is separate from this Green Space request. Carmen said the concern is there's a lot of questions here. I think a hundred people showed up at the Council meeting about Bluffton 5B, and this is a big part of the issue. The

reason why nothing has been done with the property is that it's landlocked. Carmen said a lot of this land is wetlands you're not going to be able to develop.

Vice Chair Howard made a motion to move the application forward to the Community Services and Land Use Committee with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms, particularly regarding the easements that are of concern. The motion was seconded by Peter Kristian.

In discussion, Senator Davis said the reason this is a compelling proposal is:

- the demand for possible future infrastructure from development and the impact on the May River watershed;
- it is complimentary to the school district's proposal for Willow Run;
- this is the Town's top priority and their first application; and
- dense development adjacent to Rose Hill and Woodbridge would be a major concern for those residents.

Carmen Avon Manning said she has a lot of concerns about what the Town will do with this property later. Carmen also noted the application said the property was in the Colleton River watershed, and it is in the May River Watershed. Carmen said the May River watershed in this area was already at 20% impervious in 2018 and a lot has happened since then. So, shellfish harvesting was already closed. Any development there should be severely restricted because it's already impacted the May River. We are also waiting for the health assessment. The last time the May River was sampled for that kind of activity was 2004. The Town of Bluffton approved the budget to do sampling, and those sampling results are supposed to be done by now. So, I would like to understand what the health of the May River is, so people can appreciate what the pavement is doing.

Senator Davis said it's my understanding the property would be restricted and could never be developed. Chair McShane said it's certainly my expectation that a grant agreement from Green Space is going to have restrictions. Senator Davis said my understanding in all this and being supportive of it, is that if it is purchased, there is going to be a covenant placed on it or some restrictions in perpetuity that it cannot be developed. Chair McShane said he wants to make sure the applicant accepts that is the case. Felicia Roth with the Town said yes, that's our premise, that this will go into a conservation easement.

Carmen Avon Manning said, so then with that, the LATS study doesn't need to be completed because the reason why the LATS refuses to honor an amendment is because The Town of Bluffton will not take 5B off the LATS. So, there's a lot of questions here.

Chair McShane said I think our action and purview today is, do we have enough interest to move forward. I think a lot of this may come back. I could see a spirited discussion that will take place when all the due diligence comes in.

Peter Kristian addressed the Chair and said you had an earlier comment about having a meeting with Ben and Kate. Could that same discussion be had with the Town of Bluffton?

Chair McShane said that's why I modified what I said to say, "The Towns." Chair McShane said, the general premise is, when a town shows up to negotiate on real estate, I have never experienced it to be a bargain. For our municipalities to really make good use of Green Space funding, they should be encouraged to collaborate with some entities that can often be very aggressive, very nimble, to negotiate options in contracts that can provide great bargains for the taxpayer.

Peter Kristian called for the question on the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

***CORRIDOR PROTECTION APPLICATION: OLD WILD HORSE ROAD, HILTON HEAD ISLAND:***

Mark Davis presented the initial staff summary evaluation using the computer screen. This is a Corridor Application type, our first one. Mark referred to a map and noted the Town of Hilton Head has been aggressively pursuing protection of this corridor, which is a very important part of Hilton Head Island and its character. There have been some road improvements in this area. It is a corridor application, but it would still be owned as fee simple by the Town.

Peter Kristian said, there isn't a match proposed, but the Town has already invested heavily along that corridor with their own funds, and they are one of the few municipalities, maybe the only municipality, that has a land buying program and has had it in place for many years. Peter observed that if William Hilton Parkway is expanded, part of that land will be taken as ROW. Mark Davis confirmed that would be the case, but it would be minimal.

Chair McShane said, what we talked about is, do we have some language that says that once any ROW acquisition is defined, we get some compensation back. That way we can make determination and value at the time, not trying to think ahead of DOT.

Tim Evans said, I agree with Peter. Looking at areas like this where The Town has already put money into making acquisitions--I see that level of involvement by The Town as they are matching.

Chair McShane said, I've seen you, Tim, in your professional role where you've taken an ecosystem approach where we look at a whole area and we see that connectivity. And we've been able to use that value of what they have already acquired as match. I want to make clear to the towns, when we as a committee talk about match, we're not necessarily only talking about dollars that are coming out of your treasurer. It sometimes could be bargain sale; it could be the contiguous assets owned by the town. Those are ways that we can define match. That so it's not just the town has to write a check to go in with the application--although I won't turn those down.

Ben Brown said this is an interesting property, as William Hilton Parkway is a little wider there. This is an awkward area. And the town match isn't just acquiring the adjacent properties, but it's removing an abandoned home, cleaning up a bunch of nasty tree work, and removing a bunch of landscape debris. So, it's cleaning up this whole area, removing the curb cuts and making it function much better. Back to that bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, there's a real opportunity to improve the pathway in this corridor as well.

Tim Evans said he really appreciated the amount of effort The Town has put in to making it happen.

Laurel Rhoten said she agrees with what Tim said, and the connectivity--how we just put a little bit of money in to protect this half acre, is really protecting the 10-acre parcel around it.

Carmen Avon Manning said it's another good project. My only question is about how we are splitting the funds between the four regions. Peter Kristian noted this is expensive land; that's the nature of the beast.

Senator Davis said that Carmen makes a good point, because he thinks all applicants need to understand that we are operating within the constraints of the statute, and the statute directs us and obligates us to have the money equally/equitably distributed. So, there may be a very meritorious project, but we simply can't statutorily do it because it's been constrained. That's the way the statute was drafted. At some point you fill up your bucket. So, keep in mind, when you're a town, there's a finite amount that you can get.

Carmen said I'd just like us to get the best bang for the buck.

Chair McShane said we may have conversations with those towns: you have to help us prioritize here because we're bumping up against the cap.

Vice Chair Howard said I think we should go forward with due diligence, but keep in mind that there may have to be some hard choices made.

Vice Chair Howard made a motion to move the application forward to the Community Services and Land Use Committee with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms. The motion was seconded by Laurel Rhoten. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

***FEE SIMPLE APPLICATION: MESSICK TRACTS, BEAUFORT:***

Mark Davis said this project is in the City of Beaufort, however the project is being nominated by the property owner. Mark presented the initial staff summary evaluation using the computer screen. The property is located within the Lady's Island Village Center; there have been a lot of land use studies done in this area, and the property has been marketed as a developable site. Mark said in the Green Space program, we pull development off the books. In our world of planning, sometimes development is good—where we want development. In the Green Space

program, the reason we base one-quarter of our score on adopted land use plans is to make sure we're not pulling land off the books that should develop. Mark said overall, that overarching master plans show this as good infill development. Mark said, unless the County and the City say that we've got all the development, services, and attainable housing we need, to move to pulling this off the books is a concern. From a long-range planning standpoint, we have to be mindful of that, and the Green Space Program is built to be mindful of those elements. So, in those regards, staff would see this as an opportunity for infill development.

Chair McShane confirmed with Mark that the application is for a fee-simple acquisition submitted by the current owner. Chair McShane asked who would buy the property. Mark said that is an issue. They are applying for the County to be an owner/operator which means it would then require being developed as a County owned and maintained passive park. The County does not have any plans for a passive park on these lots.

Vice Chair Howard asked if the City of Beaufort wants the property; their letter was very supportive of the application.

Chair McShane said I can't see how we can put money into something that would be privately held as fee simple; however, it could be an easement.

Tim Evans said it is not clear who we are purchasing this for—the County? The City?

Carmen Avon Manning said I hear you about your development—it's a nice parcel, but there is a low-income housing development there, and it would be nice for the residents to look at a trees and not a parking lot. That's a nice little piece of property to keep green. Chair McShane said he thinks he's hearing the committee's interest in seeing it preserved for that use. The question is more of the transactional aspect of it—who's going to be the long-term steward.

Senator Davis said, if the City of Beaufort is interested in buying it, would it be willing to commit to making it into a park or something that is an amenity. Chair McShane said I think we would frame the grant agreement that would address those parameters.

Carmen Avon Manning made a motion to move the application forward to the Community Services and Land Use Committee with a recommendation to conduct due diligence/negotiate terms, seconded by Tim Evans. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

***EXECUTIVE SESSION:***

Vice Chair Howard made a motion to go into Executive Session pursuant to S.C. Code Section 30-4-70 (A) (2): discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements for the following proposed Green Space applications: fee simple application, Jonesville Road; fee simple application, William Hilton Parkway; fee simple application, Broad Creek Marina; fee simple application, Mitchelville Road. Senator Davis seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

The Committee was in Executive Session from 10:58 AM to 11:50 AM.

**MATTERS ARISING OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

***Fee Simple Application: Jonesville Road, Hilton Head Island***

Peter Kristian made a motion to fund the application, not to exceed the appraised value of the property (\$2,187,000). Tim Evans seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous. Chair McShane clarified that all these are recommendations being made to County Council.

***Fee Simple Application: William Hilton Parkway, Hilton Head Island***

Peter Kristian made a motion to fund the application not to exceed the appraised value of the property (\$1,464,200) and any funds received from the state for future ROW acquisition go back to the Green Space fund. Carmen Avon Manning seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

***Fee Simple Application: Broad Creek Marina, Hilton Head Island***

Peter Kristian made a motion for no further consideration of this application and to not recommend funding. Chair McShane confirmed with Peter that the Committee was recommending to County Council for no further consideration nor funding. Laurel Rhoten seconded. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mark Davis said he would provide a draft 2025 meeting calendar of dates for adoption at their next meeting.

The first meeting for 2025 was set for Friday, January 24 at 10:00 AM.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 AM.

Minutes compiled by Libby Anderson, Beaufort County Planning and Zoning Department