

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission WORK SESSION MINUTES

January 28, 2026
Seven Oaks Park
6:00pm

Members Attending: Bill Harmon, Michael Cromer, Dr. Gerrick Hampton, Dr. Akil Ross, Laura Huggins

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf

Mark Smyers shared that there is new information from the Governor's office regarding Commission Member appointments; the Governor's office considers Commission Members active members as long as they have been approved by the Lexington County Delegation. Mr. Smyers stated that Commissioner Huggins is eligible to be an active Commissioner.

Chairman Harmon shared that the agenda includes Election of Officers; discussion occurred regarding the motion in General Session to state Bill Harmon as Chair, Michael Cromer as Vice Chair and Dr. Gerrick Hampton as Secretary.

Mark Smyers communicated that there is an EAGLE Scout project presentation and certificate for Kyle Zbytovsky on the agenda; Laura Huggins will recognize and present the certificate to Kyle Zbytovsky for building a pedestrian bridge at Crooked Creek Park. Mr. Smyers stated the Children's Theater kids will sing a few songs from the Matilda production; Lindsay Hudson will share a presentation on the 2025 Holiday Lights event.

Mark Smyers shared agenda items including the 2026 regular Commission meeting schedule, the budget timeline, and the FY26/27 preliminary budget to Lexington County. Vice Chairman Cromer stated that the preliminary budget is not the full budget. Mark Smyers stated that is correct; it is ICRC's fund 10 budget. Discussion occurred regarding operating budget needs, designating an emergency fund (15), and determining a reasonable amount or percent to keep in the emergency fund; the Commission discussed with the Executive Director to build an emergency reserve fund (15) aimed to maintain a floor balance between 25%-33% of a normal years annual operating budget.

Mark Smyers reviewed policy updates and Commissioner Huggins' comments on policies BF-4.3 Cash Reserve Policy and BF-5.1 File Retention Schedule & Digital Records Policy. Mr. Smyers reviewed the contract for the Seven Oaks Park utility field lighting and a budget amendment and bid awards for Crooked Creek Park gutters and Crooked Creek Park storage building. Mark Smyers communicated that the RV/campground zoning is in front of Lexington County Council; the environmental center phase I has begun; staff is reviewing phase II of the environmental center renovations; this will address office and storage space issues. Mr. Smyers shared Crooked Creek Park master planning has begun; staff have taken a deep dive communicating community center needs; the first public meeting will be held February 12. Commissioner Huggins asked what time the public meeting is scheduled. Mark Smyers replied 6:00p.m. Mark Smyers communicated that phase I of the Riverwalk and trailhead building is underway; the Shaw construction easement for phase II is complete; the Vertical Bridge easement is with their attorneys for review. Mark Smyers communicated that there are upgrades to the gate system; staff is working to get the gate system in a final state; including software, hardware, and Saluda Shoals Park East and West gates. Discussion occurred regarding athletics and the positive feedback from the public; the branding and affiliation has converted to NFL Flag football and MLS Go soccer; the benefits include apps for coaches to learn drill techniques, new uniforms, and overall improvement in the quality of the programs. Mark Smyers distributed policies for elimination: OP1 – Definition of Building Space, OP2 – Supervision of Areas, OP5 – Rental Fee Schedule, OP6 – Hours of Operation, OP9 – Advisory Councils.

There being no further discussion; the Commission moved into General Session.

Respectfully submitted, Eve Mittendorf, Recording Secretary,
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION,

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission
GENERAL SESSION

January 28, 2026
Seven Oaks Park
7:00pm

Members Attending: Bill Harmon, Michael Cromer, Dr. Gerrick Hampton, Dr. Akil Ross, Laura Huggins

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, Jay Downs, Alfred Comfort, Adrian Wright, Jason White, Andrea Harris, Jenea Gardner, Jennifer Riddle, Lindsay Hudson, Kyle Zbytovsky, Sullivan Conroy, Evie Willis, Mia Burke, Sofie Wright, Hannah Yoder, Emerita Whipple, Emma Dixon, Chase Duplaga, Torrey Jones, Lilah Gilbert, Hope Shealy, Molly Nix, Emma Poncheri

Bill Harmon called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Bill Harmon delivered the invocation. Guests were welcomed.

I. REQUIREMENTS OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

The news media was notified of the meeting; it was posted on the website, and a notice and agenda were posted at the park sites one week prior to the meeting.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MICHAEL CROMER TO ACCEPT THE OCTOBER 22, 2025 AND NOVEMBER 25, 2025 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY DR. AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO REAPPOINT BILL HARMON AS CHAIR, MICHAEL CROMER AS VICE CHAIR AND DR. GERRICK HAMPTON AS SECRETARY FOR 2026. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

IV. PUBLIC PRESENTATION

A. EAGLE Scout Project – Kyle Zbytovsky

Commissioner Huggins presented a certificate of appreciation to Kyle Zbytovsky in recognition of his Eagle Scout Service Project, which involved the construction of a 30-foot pedestrian bridge at Crooked Creek Park. Chairman Harmon thanked Kyle for his contributions at Crooked Creek Park.

B. Children’s Theater

Jenea Gardner, Program Coordinator at Crooked Creek Park, introduced a talented group of children from the Children’s Theater, who performed a selection of songs from the musical Matilda.

V. STAFF REPORTS

A. 2025 Holiday Lights Presentation – Lindsay Hudson

Lindsay Hudson presented the 2025 Holiday Lights end of year update; estimated visitors were 99,292; when adding sleighbell trot, stroll and Chairman’s Saluda Shoals Park hosted over 1M visitors. The total revenue was 979,525, sleighbell trot had 1234 participants, and the stroll was over 2500; due to populator, staff are considering adding an additional

sleighbell stroll night; total revenues for those two events were 59,325. Ms. Hudson communicated that a new concessions vendor was selected. Lindsay Hudson shared the 2025 highlights including full use of the Future Ticketing software, another successful year working with CATS Center students on a new display, and hosting over 200 soldiers from Ft. Jackson. Lindsay Hudson shared appreciation with staff and the students at the Cate Center for their contributions to another successful year. Ms. Hudson communicated that Christina Bickley, Foundation Director, raised over \$117K. Chairman Harmon communicated that this event increases approximately \$28K year after year. Commissioner Huggins liked the idea of an additional sleighbell stroll night to the event and asked the distance of the sleighbell trot. Mark Smyers responded four miles. The Commission thanked Lindsay Hudson for another successful Holiday Lights event.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2026 Regular Commission Meeting Schedule

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ON THE 2026 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY DR. AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

B. FY 26/27 Budget Timeline

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MICHAEL CROMER TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ON THE FY 26/27 BUDGET TIMELINE AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY LAURA HUGGINS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

C. Preliminary FY 26/27 Budget for Lexington County Council

A MOTION WAS MADE DR. GERRICK HAMPTON TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ON THE FY 26/27 BUDGET FOR LEXINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

D. Policy BF-4.3 Cash Reserve Policy Approval

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO AMEND POLICY BF-4.3 CASH RESERVE WITH THE FOLLOWING TWO AMENDMENTS: 1ST AMENDMENT IS UNDER THE SECOND BULLET - ADD THE WORD 'BE' AFTER THE WORD 'AND' AND BEFORE THE WORD 'DESIGNATED'; 2ND AMENDMENT IS UNDER THE LAST BULLET - DELETE THE SECOND SENTENCE AND THE FORMULA AND REVISE THE FIRST SENTENCE TO READ, "THE EMERGENCY RESERVE FUND SHOULD AIM TO MAINTAIN A FLOOR BALANCE BETWEEN 25% - 33% OF A NORMAL YEAR'S ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET. SECONDED BY DR. AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

E. Policy BF-5.1 File Retention Schedule & Digital Records Policy

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ADOPT POLICY BF-5.1 FILE RETENTION SCHEDULE & DIGITAL RECORDS POLICY WITH AN AMENDMENT UNDER SECURITY AND BACKUP; THE SECOND BULLET SHOULD READ "REGULAR BACKUPS MUST BE PERFORMED AND STORED SECURELY OFFSITE OR IN THE CLOUD." SECONDED BY DR. AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

F. Contract – Seven Oaks Park Utility Field Lighting

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO AWARD THE SOP UTILITY FIELD LIGHTING CONTRACT TO WEST ELECTRIC CONSTRUCTION. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

G. Budget Amendment – Short Term Bond Project

A MOTION WAS MADE BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO REALLOCATE MONIES SAVED FROM THE CROOKED CREEK PARK GUTTER PROJECT AND APPLY TO THE CROOKED CREEK PARK STORAGE BUILDING PROJECT. SECONDED BY DR. AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mark Smyers thanked Children's Theater for their presentation of Matilda Jr. and thanked Kyle Zytovsky for the construction of the pedestrian bridge at Crooked Creek Park as part of his EAGLE Scout project; the Eagle Scout program and the impact it has in the parks and community is wonderful. Mr. Smyers thanked Lindsay Hudson for the presentation of the 2025 Holiday Lights event; staff hit amazing measurables and helped the community build lasting Holiday memories at the same time.

Mr. Smyers shared that the community has asked the agency to focus on the Strategic Plan Refresh, particularly from a major construction standpoint; the public has outlined some substantial goals that staff are working on to build strategies to success. Mark Smyers communicated that one of the main objectives in the Strategic Plan Refresh is a full renovation to the Recreation Center at Crooked Creek Park; staff have already begun their input process, and the public portion will begin in February. Mr. Smyers stated that staff also anticipate another planning session regarding Mungo Park and the role it serves in the community; these two planning moments will aid greatly in staff's ability to pursue major capital dollars in the future. Mark Smyers communicated the opening and operation of the first phase of the Riverwalk will occur this year; this momentous occasion will forever change the way people access and enjoy Saluda Shoals Park and the Lower Saluda River. Mr. Smyers communicated that staff are excited to start phase 2 construction and kick off a new vision of the Gardendale boat ramp and future park facilities. Mr. Smyers shared that there is also substantial changes to the Environmental Education Center; it will gain new responsibilities and serve the park in a new expanded way, this gives us the opportunity to create a new identity; all of these expansions will reinforce Saluda Shoals Park as a regional destination and significantly enhance the access to outdoor recreation in the community.

Mark Smyers recognized and shared appreciation for the ICRC team and leaders; all this effort isn't possible without everyone pitching in and pulling together in the pursuit of excellence; a lot of rubber will meet the road this year and a lot of dreams will become realities.

VIII. COMMISSION RESPONSE

Dr. Akil Ross thanked staff for having students from the CATS Center participate in the creation of Holiday Lights' displays; the experience of innovating and creating a new display each year is appreciated by the students, teachers, and school district. Dr. Akil Ross expressed appreciation for staff that diligently work to keep the agency and Commission in a strong position; running an organization of this size as a governmental agency while working as a business is not an easy task but well done by this team. Vice Chairman Cromer congratulated Kyle Zytovsky for completing his EAGLE Scout project. Vice Chairman Cromer shared appreciation to the Children's Theater and commended the kids for doing a fantastic job, congratulations also to Lindsay Hudson and team on another fantastic Holiday Lights year. Vice Chairman Cromer communicated that Fort Jackson night is a special night to spend time with army troop members. Dr. Gerrick Hampton echoed Commission response; Holiday Lights is a special night and the Children's Theater performers have extraordinary talent. Dr. Gerrick Hampton stated the Bridge League is going well and can already see the potential and energy; Crossroads Intermediate will start next year in the program. Dr. Gerrick Hampton commended Jason White and team for doing a great job. Mark Smyers shared that a public meeting regarding master planning will be held at Crooked Creek Park on February 12th at 6:00 p.m.; Shuckin on the Shoals is on February 21st, and a CAST performance is coming up on March

13th at Harbison Theater. Chairman Harmon commended the staff and communicated that it would be nice to have Children's Theater present to the Commission several times a year.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO REMOVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION FROM THE AGENDA. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

X. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ADJOURN. SECONDED BY DR. AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Eve Mittendorf
Recording Secretary
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION