

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission WORK SESSION MINUTES

September 24, 2025
Crooked Creek Park
6:00pm

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

Members Absent: Laura Huggins

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf

Mark Smyers presented an overview of the agenda. Mr. Smyers communicated that the agenda includes two presentations; recognition of Aksha Pawar for completing an EAGLE scout project at Saluda Shoals Park and a presentation by Jason White on ICRC and Lex/Rich V youth sports bridge league. Discussion occurred regarding the bridge league as a mechanism for athletes to develop their skills and prepare them for school athletic programs. Dr. Akil Ross shared that the program would start small this fall with basketball and as it gets refined there may be potential to add more sports. Mr. Smyers shared that ICRC staff will run the league, and the teams will play inside the district.

Mr. Smyers distributed a copy of the FY 24/25 annual report. Dr. Akil Ross requested a correction to his academic title. Mark Smyers shared that the tax revenue number will be corrected; it should read \$5,3348,972.07. Mr. Smyers stated that a capital budget amendment is included on the agenda for Commission approval; the request is to authorize an overage of \$3,328 for purchase of equipment.

Mark Smyers shared an update on the Saluda Shoals Riverwalk; the Riverwalk trail, building and parking lot are on schedule. Mr. Smyers communicated that the October Commission meeting will include a tour of the Riverwalk. Discussion occurred regarding phase II property rights, engineering work, current lease arrangements, property ownership and road ownership. Mark Smyers provided an update on phase III; DOT will issue contracts for a designer. Mr. Smyers stated that the pedestrian bridge feasibility study received contracts from Central Midlands Council on Government (COG) with the scope of work. Mark Smyers shared that phase I of the Environmental Education Center (EEC) bids is due in October; this includes a back deck, bathroom, and interior work.

Mr. Smyers shared that the Saluda Shoals Foundation had a board retreat; kicking off a capital campaign for phase III of the Environmental Education Center (EEC); Chernoff Newman facilitated the conversation. Discussion occurred regarding the fund raising goals, design and construction costs. Mr. Smyers shared that staff will be responsible for figuring out the funding for office space and storage. Mark Smyers communicated that Christina Bickley, Foundation Director, will present an update to the Commission in October.

Discussion occurred regarding planning strategies including LWCF grant opportunities for up to \$1M, current earnings from interest, timing of grant applications and project opportunities. Mr. Smyers shared that several potential project opportunities include playgrounds, trails, recreational vehicle sites, and bathroom buildings. Discussion occurred regarding the size of a full recreational vehicle park, camp sites, conceptual drawings and cost. Mr. Smyers shared

public feedback regarding recreational needs at Crooked Creek Park and the Chapin area community; the identified needs included additional indoor recreation space and a regional park. Mr. Smyers stated he recently learned of a new grant opportunity up to \$15M with a 50/50 match requirement. Discussion occurred regarding the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission district borders; the Commission gave Mr. Smyers direction to explore opportunities regarding ICRC's special purpose district boundaries.

Mark Smyers distributed policies for Commission review: RD-3.1 Athletic Parent Code of Conduct and a revised BF-13.1 Purchasing policy. Mr. Smyers communicated that the purchasing policy includes tiers of approval; tier 1 states that a variance less than \$1000 will be approved by the Executive Director, tier 2 states that any project variance equal to or less than 5% and under \$5,000 requires Executive Director approval and provided to the Commission as a ratification, tier 3 states any project variance greater than 5% or over \$5000 will require Commission approval. Discussion occurred regarding communicating to the Commission if there is a significant change in scope whether the project is under or over the budgeted amount.

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

September 24, 2025
Crooked Creek Park
7:00pm

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

Members Absent: Laura Huggins

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, Jay Downs, Alfred Comfort, Adrian Wright, Jason White, Lindsay Hudson, Jennifer Riddle, Akshay Pawar, Bill Newell, Jr.

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 MAY 28, 2025 AND THE JULY 22, 2025 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

III. PUBLIC PRESENTATION

A. EAGLE Scout Project Presentation – Akshay Pawar

Chairman Harmon presented a certificate in recognition of an EAGLE Scout project at Saluda Shoals Park. The EAGLE Scout project involved the reconstruction of a pedestrian bridge located behind the River Center. The bridge, previously closed for several years due to deteriorating and unsafe conditions, has now been fully restored. Chairman Harmon thanked Akshay and his family for selecting an Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission park for the location of his EAGLE Scout project. Aksay Pawar thanked the Commission and staff for the opportunity and shared appreciation for the certificate and recognition.

B. Youth Sports Bridge Development League – Jason White

Jason White presented on the Youth Sports Bridge Development League. Mr. White communicated on the benefits of youth sports, shared a report from the National Parks Recreation Association (NRPA) on the challenges that are occurring nationally in youth sports, presented ICRC's athletic numbers through the years and shared the external factors that have affected ICRC's youth athletic program. Mr. White communicated that the bridge development league will seek to foster a true athletic feeder program into the schools for the youth in the Irmo and Chapin communities; it is designed for children in 5th – 8th grades. Jason White stated that ICRC's responsibilities include governing the

leagues, registration, marketing, equipment and dedicated staff; Lex/Rich 5 responsibilities include providing middle level directors and lead staff to promote, market and coach. Mr. White shared that the pilot program will occur in the FY25/26 winter basketball season. Jason White stated that staff are looking forward to the program and the benefits it will offer the youth in the community. Commissioner Hampton inquired if non-district children can participate. Mr. White stated yes, they will be included in the league; either as part of a school team or staff will build a team. Commissioner Hampton asked how many teams there are at each school. Jason White replied on the Chapin side of the district there will be approximately 18-20 teams.

IV. STAFF REPORTS – were accepted as presented

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. MOU – ICRC & Lex/Rich V Youth Sports Bridge Development League

A MOTION WAS MADE BY VICE CHAIRMAN CROMER TO ADOPT THE MOU BETWEEN ICRC AND LEX/RICH 5 TO ESTABLISH A YOUTH SPORTS BRIDGE LEAGUE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

B. FY 24/25 Annual Report

A MOTION WAS MADE BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL REPORT FY 24/25. SECONDED BY VICE CHAIRMAN CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

C. FY 25/26 Budget Amendment – Capital Fund Projects

Mark Smyers communicated that staff are requesting a budget amendment on capital expenditures; the current overage of the budgeted amount is \$3,328.48. Mr. Smyers noted that staff had completed several earlier projects which resulted in a positive variance of \$5,000. Staff are requesting approval to utilize the unencumbered funds for the \$3,328.24 overage.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY VICE CHAIRMAN CROMER TO APPROVE THE FY 25/26 BUDGET AMENDMENT ON CAPITAL FUND PROJECTS AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Smyers thanked the Commission for their continued support and shared appreciation to the Eagle Scout Akshay Pawar; the bridge repair project looked fantastic and addressed a much-needed improvement. Mark Smyers thanked Jason White and his team for their dedicated work on the Bridge League partnership with Lexington/Richland School District 5; the middle school years are both precious and challenging, and it is heartening to see the community come together to support students during this formative time. Mr. Smyers stated that while athletics may not be the path for every child, and staff recognize the need for broader support, this initiative is a bright and positive step forward for families and community.

Mark Smyers shared highlights from the FY24/25 annual report including park & facility improvements, the Strategic Plan refresh, Saluda Shoals Park groundbreaking, Seven Oaks Park therapeutic recreation room upgrade, Melvin Park racquet court completion and the Mungo Park Rock Angel art piece installation. Mr. Smyers communicated that senior services served 22,462 (up from 17,835 last year) and over 28,000 miles driven, youth scholarships supported 2,668 youth participants, as well as 53,000 volunteer hours logged (up from 42,000). Mark Smyers also shared that park visitation was at an all-time high with over 2.4 million visits, and ICRC's digital presence included over 49,000 (up from 46,000) social media followers and nearly 1.1 million website visits.

Mr. Smyers concluded by stating that he remains impressed with the efforts of the agency; while there is always room for improvement and the community is continually evolving, the agency offers a wide variety of successful programs and is supported by a hardworking team. Mark Smyers expressed gratitude to Lori Shaffer for her leadership in developing the annual report and thanked all staff for the effort reflected in the document.

VII. COMMISSION RESPONSE

Commissioner Ross commended staff on a great year and a great job; the annual report reflects 2.4M visitors; this is amazing and shows the dedication of staff to the mission and the positive impact on the community. Commissioner Ross thanked Jason White for his leadership and the effort to put together a program with a lot of technical pieces; thank you for the willingness to provide opportunity for the children in this community. Vice Chairman Cromer shared appreciation to Lori Shaffer on the annual report and how it highlights the amount of stuff going on in the agency with 74 full-time staff and 200+ part-time. Vice Chairman Cromer thanked Jason White for his presentation and stated that he looks forward to seeing the success of the bridge league pilot program. Vice Chairman Cromer shared that the Saluda Shoals Foundation held a retreat; it was a fantastic meeting that included discussion regarding fund raising. Commissioner Hampton shared appreciation and commended staff on the annual report; it is easy to read and tells a story of transparency. Commissioner Hampton thanked Jason White on his presentation. Commissioner Hampton also shared that he has coached, and his children have played at ICRC; it was time for a change; the youth development league is exactly what is needed. Chairman Harmon thanked Lori Shaffer for the annual report; it is a great tool to share with businesses, community, board members, and Foundation. Chairman Harmon shared gratitude in celebrating an EAGLE Scout this month and the positive impact it brings to the parks as well as helping the individual in a meaningful way. Chairman Harmon communicated appreciation for the athletic bridge program and the sense of belonging it provides to the kids. Chairman Harmon applauded the effort between the school district and ICRC in developing a great program.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY VICE CHAIRMAN CROMER TO ADJOURN. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Eve Mittendorf
Recording Secretary
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION