

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission

WORK SESSION MINUTES

January 29, 2025
Seven Oaks Park
6:00PM

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

Non-Members Attending: Dr. Akil Ross, Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf

Mark Smyers presented an overview of the agenda items as follows:

Mr. Smyers stated that the agenda includes an action for Election of Officers; as well as a presentation of certificates of appreciation to two employees, Wilbur McNeil and Christian Hartman, for their active role in performing CPR and saving the life of a community member and patron at Crooked Creek Park.

Mark Smyers shared that Bob Barcelona with Clemson University will give a presentation on the results of the 2020-2030 strategic plan refresh. The refresh process included a needs assessment, community member focus group meetings, and stakeholder meetings; no action is requested at this time regarding the strategic plan refresh; staff will present a final document for Commission approval in March. Mr. Smyers also stated that Lindsay Hudson, Saluda Shoals Park Director, will present a 2024 Holiday Lights year end re-cap.

Mark Smyers reviewed action items under New Business to include FY 25/26 budget timeline, a preliminary budget for Lexington County and property purchases; one of the property purchases would also satisfy an LWCF property conversion requirement from the 1980s.

Discussion occurred regarding conceptual design ideas at Hwy 60 and Hwy 6 pedestrian crossing; including an on-grade crossing, a tunnel or a pedestrian bridge. Mr. Smyers shared that discussion has occurred regarding interest in a pedestrian bridge and partnership opportunities between ICRC and COG for a feasibility study; ICRC would be responsible for 20% of the feasibility study. Discussion also occurred regarding the requirement of a formal bidding process, grants, partnerships, and match money.

Mark Smyers presented a Hazardous Weather or Catastrophic Event leave policy for review. Discussion occurred regarding approval levels, up to a number of days for Executive Director approval, and a 'not to exceed' a certain number of days without Commission approval.

Mr. Smyers announced that John Cantey, Superintendent of Operations is retiring March 29, 2025. Discussion occurred regarding a Saluda Shoals brand for the greenway. Mark Smyers shared that staff would like to embrace the Saluda Shoals Riverwalk to maximum the Saluda Shoals brand; two logos were presented, Saluda Shoals Park logo, a Saluda Shoals Riverwalk logo and possibly a Saluda Shoals Foundation logo; with varying color differences between the logos.

Mark Smyers communicated that phase I of the greenway has been delayed; the FERC information did not get submitted; as a result, there is a required 30 days of local stakeholder feedback opportunity and 45 days for FERC review; staff are asking the contractor to guarantee their bid amounts during this period. Mr. Smyers communicated that this gives staff the opportunity to evaluate trailhead building options and the opportunity to send out bids over the next 75 days; staff are looking at mid-April for the groundbreaking. Mr. Smyers shared that staff will send save-the-date invitations to VIPs for the groundbreaking ceremony.

Mark Smyers also shared a map of the property near the Gardendale area as well as a design of the building to include a gate entrance, office, restrooms, garage space, and utility space.

Mr. Smyers stated that staff are working on changing the zoning with Lexington County and the due diligence is moving along.

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 29, 2025
Seven Oaks Park
7:00PM

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

Non-Members Attending: Dr. Akil Ross, Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, Jay Downs, John Canteley, Alfred Comfort, Adrian Wright, Jason White, Andrea Harris, Lindsay Hudson, Tyler Bennett, Jenea Gardner, Christian Hartman, Wilbur McNeil

Bill Harmon called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Chairman 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 was 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 NOVEMBER 20, 2024 AND DECEMBER 23, 2024 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON.
VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ELECT BILL HARMON AS CHAIRMAN, MICHAEL CROMER AS VICE CHAIRMAN AND DR. GERRICK HAMPTON AS SECRETARY FOR 2025. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

IV. PUBLIC PRESENTATION

A. Recognition of Christian Hartman and Wilbur McNeil

Chairman Harmon shared recognition of Christian Hartman and Wilbur McNeil for performing CPR on a patron at Crooked Creek Park; their quick action resulted in saving a community member's life and has been recognized by EMS and will be included in a training video that EMS will use in the future. Commissioner Huggins stated that it is impressive how quickly these two individuals responded and how they were able to apply their training. Vice Chairman Cromer echoed Commissioner Huggins comments. Commissioner Hampton thanked them for their service. Dr. Akil Ross shared appreciation and stated they are a model for other organizations. Mark Smyers communicated that it is truly an honor to have these staff members are part of the ICRC team.

B. 2020 – 2030 Strategic Plan Refresh – Bob Barcelona, Clemson University

Bob Barcelona thanked the Commission and shared that Clemson University and ICRC staff worked together on the original 2020-2030 strategic plan in 2019. Mr. Barcelona stated that without a doubt ICRC is a world class agency; not only in the State but also a top agency in the Country. Mr. Barcelona thanked the Commission and the leadership team: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, John Canteley, Jay Downs and Alfred Comfort; the

process also included focus groups, stakeholders as well as community participation in a needs survey; staff looked at the mission, vision, values which remained the same as the current 2020-2030 plan; there were three strategic areas: facilities, programs and financial. Bob Barcelona shared that the refresh leaned deeper into facility needs; the refresh looked at demographics, growth patterns, staffing, budget (revenues and expenditures) and also benchmarked against national standards; almost all metrics were above 50% and some above 75%. Mr. Barcelona shared that there were 1100 survey participants with 204 open ended comments; there were three focus groups, which included 40+ community members participating in either a program, finance or facility focus group; discussion occurred amongst the focus groups regarding the value of ICRC parks, which included active lifestyles, socialization, greenspace, collaboration with other providers, great staff, economic impact for the community including business incubator opportunities for small businesses as well as the public's view that ICRC is a trusted agency.

Mr. Barcelona review the top level recommendations regarding facilities included adding another regional park; this supported the national standard recommendation and also showed that the ICRC district has more people than parks; the public also shared that they would like access to Lake Murray; the public wants mostly passive outdoor recreation including trails; they want connectivity to businesses, schools and an additional 30K sqft. of indoor recreational space in the Chapin area; the public shared the need to expand recreational opportunities at Mungo Park to include improvement to walking paths, possibly functional fitness stations, disc golf, and possibly a farmers' market. Bob Barcelona stated that a recommendation was made to include another revenue generating facility such as a motorized camping/RV park similar to the State Parks, or James Island Park in Charleston; the public also noted that ICRC should continue to maintain current facilities at a high level.

Mr. Barcelona reviewed the recommendations that came from the public regarding agency programs to include adaptive recreation, outdoor programs including outdoor events, environmental programs, arts/cultural programs; special events (large and small); also expand adult programs, social programming. Bob Barcelona stated that the public wants the opportunity to interact with each other, senior travel opportunities, sports instruction such as how to play golf or pickleball; youth programming and to expand capacity in the afterschool and summer camp programs.

Bob Barcelona reviewed the recommendations in the area of financial resources; the public shared that they want equitable access and equitable fees; the public requested ICRC balance capital investments between renovating, maintaining existing parks, and increasing recreational facilities; the public recommends continuing partnership with schools. Mr. Barcelona shared that aquatics was part of the last survey and continues to show a need; the recommendation is to partner with another organization; the public noted the importance of highlighting and emphasizing to the public the value of parks and recreation and to consider marketing that value; the recommendation from the public is to plan for new capital investments in light of increasing bond capacity opportunity starting in 2026 and moving forward in 2033.

Chairman Harmon shared appreciation for the plan and continuing to work with staff and provide this important feedback. Commissioner Huggins stated that it is good to hear objectively and measurably the successes and areas of need; the agency has a great team. Commissioner Huggins inquired where in the district is the greatest need and demand. Bob Barcelona stated that Chapin consistently showed the area of the most growth and demand. Discussion occurred regarding need and access to Lake Murray and how State Park's effect and creating good tourism. Bob Barcelona stated that he

would continue to work with staff to create a final document for the Commission's approval. Mr. Smyers shared that the next step is to take the survey results, stakeholder comments, and focus group recommendations and consolidate them into a marketable document for Commission adoption.

V. STAFF REPORTS

A. Holiday Lights Update – Lindsay Hudson

Lindsay Hudson presented the 2024 Holiday Lights end of year update; total vehicle count was 24,708, estimated visitors was 98,832; the average vehicles per night was 706 and the most cars in one night was 1508. Ms. Hudson shared that the total revenue was \$951,000, total expenses were \$232,373; the total revenue for activities was \$86,274; sleighbell trot had 1129 participants, and the stroll had 2300; total revenues for those two events were \$52,406 and total expenses \$17,420. Lindsay Hudson shared the highlights including the first year for tiered pricing, full use of the Future Ticketing software, another successful year working with Cate center students on the carousel display, hosting over 300 soldiers from Ft. Jackson; and over 200 Special Olympics participants attended. Lindsay Hudson shared appreciation to staff for their contributions to another successful year. Chairman Harmon thanked Lindsay Hudson for a successful Holiday Lights event.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. FY 25/26 Budget Timetable

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ACCEPT THE FY 25/26 BUDGET TIMETABLE AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

B. Preliminary FY 25/26 Budget for Lexington County Council

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO ACCEPT PRELIMINARY BY 25/26 BUDGET FOR LEXINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

C. Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study

Mark Smyers shared that staff is requesting to partner with the COG to pursue a feasibility study for a pedestrian bridge at Hwy 60 and Hwy 6; the current plan calls for an on-grade crossing; a pedestrian bridge is the safest and most desirable approach to a crossing; the partnership will help to pursue funding opportunities.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO MOVE FORWARD WITH A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

D. Property Purchase A – Irmo

Mark Smyers communicated that property A near the Gardendale area will assist in the infrastructure needs for phase II of the greenway.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO RATIFY THE CONTRACT AND GRANT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AUTHORITY TO COMPLETE THE PURCHASE

OF THE PROPERTY. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

E. Property Purchase B – Irmo

Mark Smyers shared that staff are requesting ratification of the contract to purchase property near the Gardendale area and the Lower Saluda River for approximately 42 acres; this property could be used for new recreational opportunities for the community; additionally, the property acquisition would be utilized to satisfy an LWCF mitigation from the 1980s.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO RATIFY THE CONTRACT AND GRANT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AUTHORITY TO COMPLETE THE PURCHASE OF THE PROPERTY; ADDITIONALLY, THIS ACQUISITION WOULD BE USED TO SATISFY THE LWCF PROPERTY CONVERSION REQUIREMENT. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Smyers thanked the Commission for taking time to recognize team members for their lifesaving actions; these moments are rare but warrant recognition. Mark Smyers thanked Christian Hartman and Wilbur McNeil for their bravery and communicated how proud the leadership and staff are to have them on ICRC's team.

Mark Smyers thanked Lindsay Hudson for the Holiday Lights on the River presentation; the team has done exceptionally well hosting this year's event once again; changing to dynamic pricing and incorporating a pre-purchase lane made significant improvements to the ease of use by the customers and therefore creating a better experience. Mr. Smyers communicated that these types of constant refinements help the agency to stay relevant and help staff to sustain the high quality that the public has grown to expect. Mark Smyers shared that Allen Lindler and Mike Hudson have taken on more of the leadership responsibility for this year's set up; Allen Linder has moved into a new role, which has allowed him to see more of what it takes to make this show successful. Mr. Smyers commended the maintenance team for another great year. Mark Smyers also expressed appreciation of part-time staff and rangers who were there every night of the show; there were lots of praises for this year's part-time crew as well as the rotating leadership of the rangers every night, playing a huge role in the event running smoothly.

VIII. COMMISSION RESPONSE

Commissioner Huggins shared that a repetitive theme of the meeting was that this agency has great leadership including competency, skill, the culture and excitement to be successful; that doesn't happen accidentally. Commissioner Huggins recognized Christian Hartman and Wilbur McNeil for their readiness to act in an emergency situation. Commissioner Huggins recognized Lindsay Hudson for her enthusiasm for serving 300 Ft. Jackson soldiers as well as the success of the Holiday Lights event. Vice Chairman Cromer echoed Commissioner Huggins comments; the staff and leadership are amazing, and recognized the two staff members that were heroes. Commissioner Hampton thanked Bob Barcelona and staff for the strategic plan refresh; the quality of life, the quality of the facilities, and impact the agency has on the community is huge. Commissioner Hampton highlighted that Holiday Lights was a huge success and thanked Christian Hartman and Wilbur McNeil for their willingness to act. Chairman Harmon shared a sense of pride for the entire agency and staff. Chairman Harmon recognized Christian Hartman and Wilbur McNeil

for their incredible service and stated that he was impressed by what Clemson University had to share and that ICRC is doing so well at a national level.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LAURA HUGGINS TO MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Eve Mittendorf
Recording Secretary
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission

EXECUTIVE SESSION

January 29, 2025
Seven Oaks Park
8:26 p.m.

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

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Harmon called the meeting to order at 8:26 pm.

II. REQUIREMENTS OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

In accordance with the 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 posted at the park sites.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MICHAEL CROMER TO MOVE INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS. SECONDED BY BILL HARMON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION – PERSONNEL MATTERS

Several items related to personnel matters were discussed; no action was taken during the Executive Session.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MICHAEL CROMER TO MOVE INTO PUBLIC SESSION. SECONDED BY DR. GERRICK HAMPTON. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

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

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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