



A G E N D A
OCONEE COUNTY
CONSERVATION BANK BOARD

September 29, 2021

12:30 PM

Oconee County Administrative Offices
Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC

1. Call to Order
2. Discussion/Action: Crawford Mill Application Approve/Deny
3. Adjourn

There will not be any Public Comment session at this meeting.

Assisted Listening Devices [ALD] are available to accommodate the special needs of citizens attending meetings held in Council Chambers. ALD requests should be made to the Clerk to Council at least 30 minutes prior to the meeting start time.

Oconee County Council, Committee, Board & Commission meeting schedules, agendas are posted at the Oconee County Administration Building & on the County Council Website.

BOARD MEMBERS

Andrew Smith, Chairman, District II	Emily Hitchcock, Vice-Chairman, At-Large
Laura Havran, Treasurer, District I	Ryan Keese, Secretary, District III
Nicholas Gambrell, District IV	Scuddy Walker, District V
Charles VanOver, At-Large	



Oconee County Conservation Bank Evaluation Scoresheet

Property/Project Name	Crawford Mill
Acquisition Type	fee simple
Amount Applied For	\$ 29,999
Conservation Value	\$ 300,000
Landowner	William C. Keese
Eligible OCCB Applicant	Foothills Farmstead
Acres	40.09
Location	Fair Play

Met ALL Mandatory Requirements

Yes No

If no, application fails and will not be processed until corrected.

Conservation Criteria Evaluation

Score

1. Environmental Sensitivity	11
2. Share Boundary With Protected Land	0
3. Historic or Cultural Features	1
4. Prime or Important Soil Types	0
5. Actively Farmed	3
6. Public Visibility of Property	1
7. Scenic View	2
8. Public Access	3
9. Location to Park, Forest, Municipality	2
10. Threat of Development	5
11. Size of Property	1
12. Water Quality Impact	3
13. Plans for Property	2
TOTAL SECTION I – Max 85	34

Financial Criteria Evaluation

Points

Notes

1. Financial Resources - Enforcement	Yes or No	If no, will not recommend award to Council
2. Funding Percentage Requested	2	
3. Matching Funds	5	
4. Partnerships, Etc.	3	
5. Cost Per Acre	1	
6. Other Economic Benefits	2	
TOTAL SECTION II – Max 15	13	

TOTAL Evaluation Max 100	49				
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Comments



**OCONEE COUNTY CONSERVATION BANK BOARD
SEC. 2-404(b)(4) FINDINGS**

Date: September 29, 2021

Applicant's Name: The Foothills Foundation, a South Carolina nonprofit corporation with federal tax-exempt status

Recommended Award: \$29,999.00

Parcel Name: Crawford Mill

Owner: William C. Keese

Acres: 40.09 Acres

Location: Oakway, South Carolina

Tax Map(s): 335-00-02-026 & 335-00-02-022

A. How the applicant meets the criteria set forth in section 2-403

Rock Creek runs the entire length of the property and discharges into Lake Hartwell; conservation of the property will maintain water quality in the creek and protect water quality in Lake Hartwell.

The property has habitat suitable for threatened and endangered species, such as the Golden-winged Warbler and Southern Wood Frog and contains native habitat suitable for native species such as the tiger, spotted, and green salamanders.

The property contains a Native American petroglyph and the site of a mill that operated in the late 1700's.

The property is extremely scenic with its wide, clear stream and waterfalls that can be seen from Rock Creek Road and will provide public access.

The threat of development of the property is very high as the property is adjacent to Highway 11 and very close to I-85 and could easily be converted to a commercial or residential development.

B. The purpose of the award and the use to which the land will be put

The grant will be used to help fund the fee simple purchase and placement of a conservation easement on the property. The Foothills Farmstead plans for the property include preserving the water quality of Rock Creek through buffers and erosion control measures, protecting and making the Native American petroglyph viewable by the public, building a functioning 1700's era mill on the site where the original mill burned down in 1786, and growing and grinding corn, barley, and wheat. The Foothills

Farmstead will use the property to create a 1700's living history, working farm.

C. The party responsible for managing and maintaining the land

The Foothills Farmstead will be responsible for managing and maintaining the property and intends to partner with the Lake Hartwell Country Regional Tourism Commission, which will have the duty of overseeing and administering the project.

D. The party responsible for monitoring and enforcing any conservation easements or other restrictions upon the land

The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District will hold a conservation easement on the property and will monitor the project and have the authority to bring enforcement actions to ensure that the conservation values are protected in perpetuity.

E. How the parties designated in items C And D possess the expertise and financial resources to fulfill their obligations

Though only in business since 2017, The Foothills Farmstead has raised \$150,000 to create an 1800's working farmstead on 16 acres it leases from Oconee County and which has been open to the public since July 2020. It has moved an 1870's farmhouse onto the property, which it will complete this year. It is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation with a Board of Directors and staff dedicated to its mission to preserve and educate the public about the agricultural way of life in the Foothills of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. The Foothills Farmstead's partnership with the Lake Hartwell Country Regional Tourism Commission, which manages the Bart Garrison Agricultural Museum and the Century Farm program for the State, will bring invaluable substantive and administrative expertise to the project. Finally, the Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District, which holds easements on 2700 acres in Oconee County and maintains a monitoring account with Oconee Federal Savings and Loan, will ensure that your conservation values on the property are maintained in perpetuity.

F. The availability of funds in the OCCB fund for the award

The Conservation Bank currently has available funds in the amount of \$328,027.

G. Conservation Value and Cost Per Acre for OCCB to support project

Due to the location of the property, the value to the County as conservation property is extremely high and is a bargain at a cost of \$748 per acre to the County.

H. Any other findings or information relevant to the award

The current owner of the property, William C. Keese is from an Oconee County family that traces its roots to the inception of America. Mr. Keese has a strong affinity for the history and agricultural heritage of Oconee County. The property has been appraised at \$600,000, yet Mr. Keese is going to sell the property to The Foothills Farmstead for \$300,000 and insisted that The Foothills Farmstead be in charge of this project. The next step in The Foothills Farmstead's goal of acquiring the property and building the 1700's working farm is obtain a grant from the South Carolina Conservation Bank for \$275,000.

Model Rules
of Parliamentary
Procedure
for
South Carolina
Counties, 2nd edition

edited by

M. Clifton Scott

Senior Staff Attorney

and

Jenna Stephens

Staff Attorney

The single member of council brought a declaratory judgment action against the county administrator to obtain certain, more complete information regarding the county's legal bills. The council member was convinced that the bills would reveal waste and improper practices and intended to release the information to the public. The remainder of council was concerned that the disclosure would breach county council's attorney-client privilege and directed the administrator to limit the access of the single council member.

The Supreme Court held in a 4 to 1 opinion that the administrator could not be compelled to disclose the information. There were a number of issues at work in *Wilson*, not the least of which was the council member's disclosure that she intended to reveal information believed to be covered by the attorney-client privilege. Chief Justice Toal wrote a concurring opinion, concurred in by Justice Pleicones, which would have held that this was a purely political issue and one that the courts should have left alone. The importance of *Wilson* is that it confirms that county council can only act as a body, not as individuals.

Model Rule 4. Meetings, Notice.

County council shall meet at least once monthly, but may meet more frequently provided that public notice, as described herein, is provided. Written public notice shall be given for all regularly scheduled meetings at the beginning of each calendar year. Notice must include the dates, times and places of the meetings.

Public notice of each called, special or rescheduled meeting must be posted on a bulletin board at the meeting place for county council, or other suitable place, as early as practicable, but not less than twenty-four hours prior to each meeting. The notice must include the agenda and the date, time and place of the meeting. The twenty-four hour requirement for posting notice does not apply for emergency meetings.

All persons, organizations, and news media requesting notification of county council meetings shall be notified of the times and places, and given copies of the agenda for all meetings, whether scheduled, rescheduled or called. Efforts made to comply with this notice requirement shall be noted in the minutes.

Special meetings may be called by the chair or by the majority of county council, provided that the notice requirements are met. Meetings, whether scheduled, rescheduled or called, may be canceled or rescheduled by the chair or by a majority of county council, provided that the requirement for at least one meeting per month is met. Meeting notice requirements apply to committee meetings as well as meetings of the full council.

Comment: All but the last paragraph were taken either from S.C. Code Ann. § 4-9-100 or § 4-9-110, or from FOIA, § 30-4-80. One specific provision of FOIA, at § 30-4-80, requires that the, "Agenda, if any, for regularly scheduled meetings must be posted on a bulletin board at the office or meeting place of the public body at least twenty-four hours prior to such meetings." The final paragraph was inserted to clarify the issue of who has the authority to cancel or reschedule meetings, as neither the S.C. Code nor *RONR* specifies.