



# MINUTES CONSERVATION BANK BOARD

April 6, 2021

Oconee County Administrative Offices, Council Chambers  
415 S. Pine Street, Walhalla, SC 29691

## **MEMBERS**

Mr. Andrew Smith, Chair, District II  
Ms. Emily Hitchcock, Vice Chairman, At Large  
Mr. Ryan Keese, Secretary, District, III  
Ms. Laura Havran, Treasurer, District I

Mr. Nicholas Gambrell, District IV  
Mr. Scuddy Walker, District V  
Mr. Charles VanOver, At Large  
Ms. Katie D. Smith, Staff Liaison

The Oconee County Conservation Bank Board [OCCB] met at 9:00 a.m. in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all members present [except Mr. Keese & Ms. Havran; Mr. Gambrell left early] and Katie D. Smith, Clerk to Council acting as staff liaison.

**Press:** Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [[www.oconeesc.com/council](http://www.oconeesc.com/council)]. In addition, it was made available [*upon request*] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

No members of the media were present.

## **Call to Order**

Mr. Smith called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. VanOver, approved 5 – 0, to approve the minutes from March 2, 2021 meeting as presented.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Due to Ms. Havran's absence, Mr. VanOver read the Treasurer's Reports for Community First Bank and the Local Government Investment Pool [State Pool] and noted they are accurate as presented. She further noted the balances on the reports are as follows:

Community First Bank for February 2021 is \$4,420.00;

Local Government Investment Pool [State Pool] for February 2021 is \$344,328.95.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. VanOver, approved 5 – 0, to accept as presented the Treasurer's Report for both Community First Bank and the Local Government Investment Pool [State Pool] for February 2021.

## **Fundraising & Public Relations Reports**

Mr. Smith noted he has tried to contact Senator Alexander's office but have not been able to schedule a meeting. He noted he spoke with Phil Shirley, Director of Oconee Parks, Recreation, & Tourism, who noted he is in regular contact with Senator Alexander and was asked to mention the OCCB. Mr. Shirley also noted he would be interested in looking for opportunities for the OCCB to coordinate with PRT on potential projects or funding and further noted Senator Alexander would possibly be interested

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in a specific project or property rather than the idea of an endowment from the Legislature to help generate revenue.

Mr. Smith further noted he had a conversation with Ms. Brock, County Administrator, regarding grant writing and noted one of the items OCCB want to start was write grant proposals to private foundations or other entities. He further noted there is a Grant Writer for Oconee County but would not be available for the OCCB as the grant writer writes grant proposals for specific County entities or projects. He further noted if the OCCB were to write a grant, Ms. Brock requested to review the grant proposals before submission. Additionally, he noted he has started working on a proposal with the Duke Energy foundation.

Additionally, Mr. Smith noted he spoke with Mr. Paul Cain, County Council member, District III, regarding discussing potential corporate donors and contacts.

Ms. Hitchcock asked has there been any consideration regarding starting an official campaign with attendant publicity and setting a goal.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith, approved 5 – 0, to direct the Information Technology department to add a link to the OCCB webpage for online donations.

Mr. Smith further noted Mr. Keese is coordinating a meeting between several OCCB members and staff of The Journal to discuss an article for the paper.

Discussion for the press release continued to include pictures of projects, quotes from representatives of eligible partners, and the need for additional funds, changes requested by the Board to the OCCB's webpage has been made, and no more than three members can meet at one time due to quorum.

Mr. Smith wrapped up this discussion reviewing for the OCCB members of the fundraising committee and the procedures committee, remaining funds for grants, and number of grants that have been awarded.

### **Discussion Items**

The following motions reference the revised Oconee County Conservation Bank Board [OCCB] forms with the changes being discussed.

#### **Discussion and/or action regarding OCCB Grant Agreement**

Mr. Smith noted the grant agreement was not approved at the last meeting due to needing additional language related to mortgage information. He utilized a handout entitled "Grant Agreement" [copy filed with backup materials] and noted he added "C" on page 10 and changed the page numbers of the handout.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. VanOver, to approve the Grant Agreement.

Change to the form includes page numbering is 10 instead of 9 and added "C" on page number 10.

Regarding the previous motion made by Ms. Hitchcock, seconded by Mr. VanOver, it was approved 5 – 0, to approve the Grant Agreement form.

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Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith, approved 5 – 0, to direct the Clerk to Council to request the Information Technology department to add the grant agreement to the County OCCB webpage.

Discussion and/or action regarding amending Policy 0002, Bank Account & Policy 0003, Grant Procedures

Policy 0002, Bank Account

Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. VanOver, to approve the revised Policy 0002, Bank Account [copy filed with backup materials].

Changes to the form include remove draft 3, added #4 under definitions entitled “Disburse”, correct the spelling of April on page 2, added “Notification of award to applicant” to the checklist, and added Applicant provides written acceptance of award to the checklist.

Regarding the previous motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. VanOver, it was approved 5 – 0, to approve the revised Policy 0002, Bank Account with the additions as noted above.

Policy 0003, Grant Procedures

Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hitchcock, to approve the revised Policy 0003, Grant Procedures [copy filed with backup materials].

Changes to form include remove the word “Draft” from the front page and added language “if money is to be wired from the Local Government Investment Pool to the closing attorney’s escrow account” at the end of the last sentence in paragraph 4 on page 4.

Regarding the previous motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Hitchcock, it was approved 5 – 0, to approve the revised Policy 0003, Grant Procedures with the additions noted above.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith, approved 5 – 0, to direct the Clerk to Council to request the Information Technology department to add the revised Policy 0002, Bank Account and checklist & revised Policy 0003, Grant Procedures, to the County OCCB webpage.

Discussion and/or action regarding pending grants

Mr. Smith noted there was one grant pending where funds have not been dispersed, which is the Peggy Moore project. He further noted the Oconee Soil & Water Conservation District [OSWCD] is the applicant, the project has been approved by the OCCB, and the OSWCD has forwarded an acceptance letter for the award. He wrapped up the discussion noting that Eddie Martin, OSWCD, has sent all the materials needed to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and if accepted, they should close in early June of 2021.

Mr. Smith distributed a chart entitled “Oconee County Conservation Bank Grants Awarded as of April 6, 2021” [copy filed with backup materials].

Discussion and/or action regarding applications submitted by the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline

Mr. Smith noted Upstate Forever submitted two grant proposals and the Clerk to Council sent to OCCB members. He noted Ms. Dorothy Heger was present for the Taychoedah project and Mr. Ernie Lombard was present for the Whetstone Hill project. Mr. Smith asked the members to review the

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applications within the next two weeks, and if any questions arise, send to him and he would forward to the applicant / landowner.

OCCB discussed the Taychoedah project first. Discussion continued to include but not limited to:

- Copy of mortgage was attached but the letter to the lender was not attached
- Must have documentation that the lender was notified of the application for funding for conservation easement
- Mr. Starker, Upstate Forever, noted Ms. Heger's attorney was working on subordination agreement
- No additional funding requested except of the OCCB
- Landowner asked if her attorney could write a summary letter as to what happened or what will happen; members noted that would be fine
- Property interest compensation will be a donation from the landowner to Upstate Forever
- Land management plan
- Letter from the landowner explaining how they will uphold their end of the agreement to enforce the conservation easement and manage the land
- Documentation from the landowner if they engage in services, such as a professional forester, either in the past, present, or anticipate in the future
- Cannot exclude agriculture from a conservation easement; always a reserved right for farming
- Hunting, fishing, & agriculture are always included in every conservation easement

OCCB discussed the Whetstone Hill project next. Discussion continued to include but not limited to:

- Land management plan
- Streamer wetlands buffer
- Documentation on what efforts are going to be made to keep the cows out of the stream
- Application with OSWCD for guidance and/or funding if available
- Landowner gave a brief overview of the property and how he obtained ownership of the property

Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hitchcock, approved 4 – 0, to authorize 2 of the board members to visit the Taychoedah property and 2 of the board members of visit the Whetstone Hill property and allow the Chairman to appoint the members that will be visiting the properties.

Mr. Gambrell left the meeting during this discussion.

Mr. Smith noted this was the first time the applicants have used the new applications. Mr. Starker noted the use of the applications was better but there are still “some wrinkles”. He also noted he would go back through the application and would give Mr. Smith suggestions. He further noted it would be helpful if more definitions were included.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Starker to send any specific suggestions and they would consider adding to the forms.

Mr. Starker further noted that the document is in a PDF format and on some questions you can add text and others you cannot and further noted the font is different sizes.

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**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at the Oconee County Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC 29691.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. VanOver made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn the meeting at 10:36 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Katie D. Smith  
Clerk to Council & Staff Liaison

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