



# MINUTES CONSERVATION BANK BOARD

August 9, 2022

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

## **MEMBERS**

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

Vacant, District IV  
Mr. Scuddy Walker, Vice Chairman, District V  
Vacant, At Large  
Ms. Jennifer C. Adams, 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 [Mr. Andy Smith absent] and Jennifer C. Adams, 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. Walker called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. Keese, approved 4 – 0, to amend the agenda to add election of a new Chair, since Mr. Andy Smith has resigned from the Chair position but will remain an active Board member.

## **Election of New Chair**

Mr. Keese made a motion, seconded by Ms. Havran, nominating Mr. Walker as new Chair.

Mr. Walker declined the nomination for the position.

Mr. Walker made a motion, seconded by Ms. Havran, approved 4 – 0, nominating Ms. Hitchcock as new Chair.

Mr. Walker turned the meeting over to Ms. Hitchcock to proceed.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Keese made a motion, seconded by Ms. Havran, to approve the May 24, 2022 meeting minutes as presented.

Ms. Hitchcock noted that two items in the minutes had not been completed, one being a letter to Naturaland Trust and one being the management of the Grants Dispersed chart [copy in backup].

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Ms. Hitchcock asked the Board for a volunteer to complete the letter to Naturland Trust informing them of Policy 0005 and that it will apply to the William Lyles Estate, if indeed the estate goes to the Forest Service.

Ms. Havran suggested Ms. Hitchcock complete the letter, since she understands the circumstances related to Naturland Trust and the William Lyles Estate.

Ms. Hitchcock volunteered to complete the letter.

Ms. Hitchcock also informed the Board that Ms. Adams, staff liaison, was nominated in her absence at the last meeting to manage the Grants Disbursed chart but has since stated that managing this chart was not within her comfort zone.

Ms. Hitchcock asked for a volunteer on the Board, other than the Chair, to manage the Grants Disbursed chart.

Mr. Keese, OCCB Board Secretary, offered to take over this responsibility.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Ms. Havran, for Mr. Keese to assume the responsibility of managing the Grants Disbursed chart.

Mr. Keese stated he would contact Mr. Smith in regards to getting the Excel file of the chart.

Ms. Hitchcock noted to Mr. Keese a copy of the Grants Disbursed chart should be emailed to the staff liaison, Ms. Adams, before every meeting so that the Board has a copy in the backup material and it gets placed on the agenda.

Motion for Mr. Keese to assume the responsibility of managing the Grants Disbursed chart approved 4 – 0.

Motion to approve the May 24, 2022 meeting minutes as presented approved 4 – 0.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Havran 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 May 2022 is \$3941.00, June 2022 is \$4041.00, July 2022 is \$4041.00; Local Government Investment Pool [State Pool] for May 2022 is \$279,622.87, June 2022 is \$279,912.08 and for July 2022 is \$280,321.58.

Mr. Keese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Walker, approved 4 – 0, to accept as presented the Treasurer's Report for Community First Bank for May, June, July of 2022 and the Local Government Investment Pool [State Pool] for May, June, July of 2022.

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## **Fundraising & Public Relations Reports**

Ms. Hitchcock referred to the current donation list [copy in backup] and reviewed this document with the Board.

Mr. Keese addressed the Board stating that the Board needs to get proactive with fundraising for the OCCB or there is a real possibility that the Conservation Bank will run out of funds.

Ms. Hitchcock noted that Mr. Smith [absent from this meeting] has been in contact with Ms. Debbie Dubose, who is enthusiastic about helping OCCB with a major endowment campaign and that Upstate Forever has indicated they would help provide some support and/or wisdom to the OCCB should they launch an endowment campaign.

Ms. Hitchcock continued on and provided additional details to the Board regarding a possible endowment, noting that once the amendments to the OCCB Ordinance have passed, the Conservation Bank would enter into a contract with the Foothills Foundation and will have to provide \$50,000.00 to open the endowment and start major fundraising campaign.

Mr. Keese offered some background information on Ms. Dubose, noting that she is an Oconee County native, graduate of Seneca High School, and has 30 plus years of experience in fundraising and public speaking.

Short discussion followed by the Board regarding a possible OCCB endowment.

## **Discussion Items**

### **Discussion and/or action regarding the status of reports to Council and Duke**

Ms. Hitchcock noted to the Board that Mr. Smith updated the reports to Duke and Council to include all information up to the end of the FY 2021/2022 and the final reports would need to be voted on by the Board.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Mr. Walker, approved 4 – 0, that the OCCB Report to Council [copy in backup] be sent to out as presented with a change to footnote one that would indicate Ms. Emily Hitchcock was elected as Board Chair.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Ms. Havran, to accept the Duke Report [copy in backup] as presented with the following three changes:

1. Changing Mr. Andy Smith on the letterhead to a board member and not Chair.
2. Remove Mr. Gambrell, as he has resigned from the board, and list this seat as vacant.
3. Add “Chair” under Ms. Hitchcock’s name on the letterhead.

Mr. Keese clarified with Ms. Hitchcock that there are now two vacant positions on the Board.

Ms. Hitchcock noted the importance that all members attend each meeting and if more than one member is absent, they would not have a quorum.

Motion approved 4 – 0.

Mr. Keese inquired about the option of zooming a member in on a meeting if the need arises.

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Ms. Hitchcock stated that virtual attendance would be an option and that Council has used this for members in the past.

**Discussion and/or action regarding approval of Request to Transfer Property Form**

Ms. Hitchcock informed the Board that she forgot to include the Request to Transfer Property Form [copy filed in backup] that should be attached to previously approved Policy 0005.

Ms. Hitchcock made a motion, seconded by Ms. Havran, approved 4 – 0, to adopt the form for the Request for Approval to Transfer Property Interest Policy 0005, with one change that would only include inserting the [councilclerkinfo@oconeesc.com](mailto:councilclerkinfo@oconeesc.com) email on the bottom right of the cover page.

**Discussion and/or action regarding Board Terms**

Ms. Hitchcock informed the Board that it is time for Board member questionnaires to be updated for members whose terms expire in January of 2023 and are eligible for reappointment.

Ms. Adams, staff liaison, informed Ms. Hitchcock and the Board that questionnaires have been placed on the desks of Board members that are up for reappointment in January of 2023.

Ms. Hitchcock asked that Ms. Havran and Mr. Keese complete their forms and return them to Ms. Adams by January of 2023, assuming they are still interested in being reappointed to the OCCB for a second term.

**Update on status of receipt of recorded closing documents from recipients**

Ms. Hitchcock noted that this topic is an FYI and that if Council adopts the amendments to the OCCB Ordinance, then after closing, the grant recipients would be responsible for providing the Board with copies of certain closing documents for their file.

**Update on status of ordinance amendments**

Ms. Hitchcock updated the Board stating that the amendments to the OCCB Ordinance have been presented to Council for first and second reading and a public hearing along with third reading is scheduled for August 16, 2022 at the County Council meeting, one week from today.

Ms. Hitchcock let the Board know that she would be in attendance at the meeting in case Council should have any questions during the public hearing and invited other Board members to attend in a show of support.

Mr. Keese stated he would try to be in attendance for the Council meeting.

**Update on status of OCCB vacant seats**

Ms. Hitchcock updated the Board regarding Mr. Gambrell's resignation this past week and informed them that there are now two vacant seats and encouraged the Board to talk with citizens who may be interested in land conservation and urge them to fill out a questionnaire for a possible appointment to the OCCB.

Ms. Hitchcock gave an overview of what the OCCB Ordinance states in regards to citizens who want to serve on the Board.

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**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, September 13, 2022, at the Oconee County Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC 29691.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. Keese made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Jennifer C. Adams  
Clerk to Council & Staff Liaison

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