



MINUTES
CONSERVATION BANK BOARD
September 10, 2024
Oconee County Administrative Offices, Council Chambers
415 S. Pine Street, Walhalla, SC 29691

MEMBERS

Ms. Emelyn Jones, Chair, At Large
Mr. Andrew Smith, Vice Chair, District II
Mr. Ryan Keese, Secretary, District, III
Mr. Gordon Becker, District I

Mr. Taylor Howard, Treasurer, District IV
Mr. Scuddy Walker, District V
Ms. Jennifer Fry, At Large
Mrs. 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. Howard and Mr. Keese 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]. 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

Ms. Jones called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Becker, approved 5 – 0, to approve the May 14, 2024 regular meeting minutes as presented.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Jones noted that the Treasurer's Reports were included in the backup material that all Board members received and pointed out that the funds for the Fall Creek Headwaters closing have been transferred into the Community First bank account.

Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Walker, approved 5 – 0, to accept as presented the Treasurer's Reports [copy in backup] for Community First Bank for May of 2024, June of 2024 and July of 2024 and the Local Government Investment Pool [State Pool] for May of 2024, June of 2024 and July of 2024.

Fundraising and Public Relations Report

None for this meeting.

Grants Status

Mr. Walker informed the Board that there have been no changes in the OCCB Grants Disbursed and Expenses chart [copy filed in backup].

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Mr. Smith asked to backup to the “Fundraising and Public Relations Report” on the agenda and went on to explain that the Oconee Food Council, on which he is a Board member, is holding a community event on November 9, 2024 and provided details related to this event.

Mr. Smith asked if it would be appropriate to have representation of the OCCB at this event.

Ms. Jones stated that since Mr. Smith is the Vice Chair of the OCCB, he could represent the OCCB at this community event.

Discussion Items

New Member Introduction – Ms. Jessica Fry

Ms. Jones introduced Ms. Fry, the new At-Large Representative on the OCCB.

Ms. Fry provided the Board with some background information related to her non-profit organization, Wild Hearts Equine Therapy, located in Seneca, SC.

Update on Fall Creek Headwaters Closing

Ms. Jones provided the Board with the progress of the Fall Creek Headwaters closing, noting the closing is set for early-to-mid October 2024.

Mr. Smith inquired if Fall Creek Headwaters had received funding from the South Carolina Conservation Bank.

Ms. Jones stated that funding has been approved from the South Carolina Conservation Bank for Fall Creek Headwaters but closing documents for this funding have not been completed.

Discussion regarding the SC Land Trust

Ms. Jones informed the Board that at the September 3, 2024 Oconee County Council meeting, Council approved the request for the OCCB to join the SC Land Trust, noting this is simply for networking purposes.

Ms. Jones informed the Board that the SC Land Trust’s Annual Retreat is going to be held at Table Rock on February 5 – 6, 2025.

Discussion regarding signers on the OCCB Community First Checking Account

Ms. Jones informed the Board that Mr. Smith, Mr. Keese, Ms. Adams and the County Administrator are the current signers on the OCCB Community First Checking Account and noted that Mr. Howard, as Treasurer, and herself, as Chair, needed to be added as signers.

Mrs. Adams, staff liaison, remarked that she was unsure if there is a limit as to how many signers could be on the Community First account.

Mr. Smith noted that he and Mr. Keese would need to roll off as signers because their terms on the OCCB were set to end in December.

Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Walker, approved 5 – 0, to approved removing Mr. Keese and himself, Mr. Smith, as signatories on the OCCB Community First bank account and adding OCCB

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Chair, Ms. Jones, and OCCB Treasurer, Mr. Howard, on the OCCB Community First bank account as their replacement.

Discussion regarding the remaining OCCB meetings in 2024

Ms. Jones stated that there are two remaining OCCB meetings that scheduled are for November 12, 2024 and December 10, 2024 and, unless there is new business that arises before those meetings, today could possibly be the last OCCB meeting of the year.

Mr. Becker noted that the minutes from today's meeting would need to be approved before any changes to the signers on the OCCB Community First checking account could be completed.

Ms. Jones noted that she plans to reach out to the SC Farm Bureau Land Trust to just remind them that the OCCB is here to help and support land conservation.

Mr. Smith inquired if there was any business that would need to be handled at the December 10, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Adams informed the Board that the setting of the 2025 OCCB meeting schedule and appointment of Board officers would take place at the previously scheduled February 11, 2025 meeting.

Mr. Smith then noted that the OCCB has an application period that closes on November 1, 2024.

Ms. Jones agreed that if an application was received before the November 1, 2024 deadline, the Board would absolutely meet as scheduled.

Ms. Jones noted that she forgot to add "A Minute for Conservation" to the agenda and then provided the Board with details regarding the Saluda Grade Trail that was recently approved.

Mr. Smith reminded Ms. Jones that agenda items could not be added during the meeting and suggested that the information she just provided related to the Saluda Grade Trail be added under the "Fundraising and Public Relations Report" portion of this meeting.

Ms. Adams pulled up the May 14, 2024 meeting minutes for Mr. Smith to review and ensure that all action items approved by the Board at that meeting have been completed.

Ms. Fry asked if a Board member could bring her up to speed regarding how the OCCB obtained funding and what is needed in the area of fundraising and public relations.

Ms. Jones and Mr. Smith provided details to Ms. Fry related to OCCB funding and fundraising.

Ms. Fry then inquired if it is within the scope of the OCCB to be involved with a project like the Saluda Grade Trail.

Mr. Smith and Ms. Jones noted, that while it is not within the scope of the OCCB to form a project like the Saluda Grade Trail, the OCCB could help fund and promote a similar project.

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Mr. Smith referred to the OCCB chart entitled, “Oconee County Conservation Bank Grants Disbursed & Expenses” [copy in backup] and informed the Board that once the Fall Creek Headwaters property closes, he will update this chart.

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 a.m. on a motion made by Mr. Becker, seconded by Ms. Fry.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jennifer C. Adams
Clerk to Council & Staff Liaison

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