

# Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission

## WORK SESSION MINUTES

May 25, 2022  
Seven Oaks Park  
6:30pm

Members Attending: Bill Harmon, Gary Boyd, Akil Ross, Michael Cromer

Members Absent: Laura Huggins

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf

Mark Smyers presented an overview of the agenda. Mr. Smyers shared that two easements will be presented by Jay Downs in the General Session; new business includes FY 21/22 budget amendment, FY 22/23 budget adoption, contract approval for splash pad design and build, an emergency reserve fund, City of Columbia easements and feasibility and conceptual plan ratification. Mark Smyers shared that the splash pad redesign includes ADA access.

Discussion occurred regarding tax collections, the trends of tax and revenue collections from 2018 – 2022, and projections including a \$2M emergency cash reserve in Fund 15. Commissioner Cromer inquired if one month of operations equal approximately \$500K. Mark Smyers stated yes. Vice Chairman Boyd inquired under what authority is staff pulling the money out of the reserve. Mr. Smyers shared that staff presented the recommendation for an emergency fund in April 2022 Commission meeting and committed to presenting in May 2022 a value for the emergency fund.

Chairman Harmon inquired if the reserve fund impacts the funding of the OPEB liability. Mark Smyers stated that the OPEB funding was not included in the budget, staff is waiting on a second actuarial recommendation. Chairman Harmon inquired if staff is anticipating making a contribution in the 22/23 budget. Mark Smyers stated not immediately. Discussion occurred regarding the financial statements, debt and liability, rates, and establishing a trust for OPEB.

Mark Smyers shared that the agenda includes a ratification for a feasibility study for potential property; staff hired a firm to explore the constructability of the property; staff is requesting Commission approval to apply the \$5000 cost for the feasibility study to the short-term bond fund.

Mark Smyers shared a new policy format; policy approvals would be presented in one meeting and approved by the Commission in the next meeting. ICRC's employment attorney has projected sending staff the revised personnel policies by the end of June. Mr. Smyers stated that staff's goal is to share with the Commission the updated policies by end of July. Mark Smyers also shared the categories of the policies and formatting of the policies; staff's goal is to also reference related procedures.

Commissioner Ross stated that the Commission approves policies and staff establish the procedures. Mark Smyers stated yes. Mark Smyers shared that under Policy and Procedures there will be policy defining who has authority and at what level. Mr. Smyers shared that the authority to establish policy is only granted to the majority vote of the Irmo Chapin Recreation

Commission forward; policy is intended to be drafted to define the boundaries of operation of agency staff and function; the authority for procedures is granted to the Executive Director; procedures are intended to give agency staff guidelines to the functions of agency business.

Vice Chairman Boyd shared the importance of identifying to the staff the guidelines. Mark Smyers agreed and that procedures should remain nimble in order to meet business needs; however, policy will be rigged and declare solid boundaries of safety by the Board and staff. Vice Chairman Boyd inquired if an additional called meeting is necessary for review of the policies. Discussion occurred regarding the Commission having time to thoroughly review policies, staff operating under current policies until new policies are established, and the timing of presenting and approving policies. Mr. Smyers shared that the rhythm is to review policies in one Commission meeting and then approve in the next Commission meeting; the idea is to take a few policies at a time to review and approve. Commissioner Cromer suggested that the Board start the work sessions early to have time to discuss the policies presented. Mr. Smyers stated that the Commission can discuss the policy for as long as they wish; the Chairman would direct staff not to put the policy on the agenda for approval until the Board is ready.

Chairman Harmon inquired on why the first recommendation is for the Commission to approve an easement to the City of Columbia at Seven Oaks Park; but the second recommendation is to grant Jay Downs authority to approve the easement at Saluda Shoals Park. Mark Smyers stated that Jay Downs will present in General Session the easement requests; staff is working with City of Columbia to prepare the legal document for the easement at Saluda Shoals. Mr. Smyers shared that Jay Downs will present in concept what the City of Columbia is wanting to prepare for approval.

Commissioner Cromer inquired if the emergency reserve fund recommendation on the agenda includes guidelines on how to access the funds. Mark Smyers communicated that the approval grants staff the immediate authority to create the emergency reserve fund; future policy will be developed to include procedures on how to access the funds.

With 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**

May 25, 2022  
Seven Oaks Park  
7:00pm

Members Attending: Bill Harmon, Gary Boyd, Akil Ross, Michael Cromer

Members Absent: Laura Huggins

Non-Members Attending: Mark Smyers, Eve Mittendorf, Jay Downs, John Cantey, Alfred Comfort, Andrea Harris

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 AKIL ROSS TO ACCEPT THE APRIL 27, 2022, MINUTES AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

### **III. STAFF REPORTS**

Jay Downs presented an update on the City of Columbia's sanitary sewer development through Saluda Shoals Park. Mr. Downs shared that the City of Columbia is increasing the size of the sewer pipes from approximately a 30" pipe to approximately a 40" pipe in order to correct the overflow problems in the park and along the river. Mr. Downs shared photos of the construction space, the length of trail system removed, the process of installing the piping, and the safety practices put in place. Chairman Harmon inquired if the pipe was for storm water. Jay Downs stated that the new pipe is for sanitary sewage. Mr. Downs shared that the City of Columbia has an existing easement that included 25', but they required an additional 25 more feet in order to accomplish the project. Jay Downs also shared that the City of Columbia will replace all the concrete trails that were removed; additionally, staff is negotiating with the City of Columbia to replace the trail system at 12' wide vs 8' in order to match the future greenway trail. Jay Downs communicated that the City of Columbia is also planning to improve drainage problem areas on the trail, lower the manholes, add parking, replace and restore crush and run, and grass areas along the trail system. Mr. Downs also stated that staff see additional business opportunities by widening the trails, better trailhead areas, expansion of the view and access to the river, and most importantly eliminating the sewer spillage into the park and river.

Jay Downs shared that the City of Columbia easement request for Saluda Shoals is currently in their legal department for review. Mr. Downs presented an easement drawing from the City of Columbia; the request is to reduce the length of construction and damage to the front of the park by boring under the road and connecting to the other side; this recommendation also avoids closing the roadway at the front of the park.

Jay Downs shared the purpose of the easement request for Seven Oaks Park is to make sewer improvements along Kinley Creek, remove manholes, eliminate sewage spills, and upgrade portions of the pipe. Chairman Harmon inquired on the timeframe of the project. Mr. Downs shared approximately 6-8 months after signing the easement agreements.

Commissioner Ross inquired if the sewer project at Saluda Shoals Park includes pump stations or is it gravity fed. Jay Downs stated that it is all gravity; there will be temporary pump stations during construction. Chairman Harmon inquired on the impact of this project on operations. Mr. Downs shared that there is a period of time when the lower boat landing will be closed; the City of Columbia is trying to get through that area of construction before Labor Day. Chairman Harmon inquired if any pass holders were concerned. Jay Downs shared that approximately three Saluda Shoals Park pass holders have requested refunds. Chairman Harmon and Commissioner Ross thanked Jay Downs for the update and presentation.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. FY 21/22 Budget Amendment**

Mark Smyers communicated that staff is requesting to amend the current year budget to include reducing the contingency fund by \$25K and increase the general fund for unexpected maintenance expenses at Seven Oaks Park and Crooked Creek Park; additionally, Saluda Shoals Park maintenance budget will increase by \$35K to cover unexpected expenses and reduce the special revenue fund by the same amount.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GARY BOYD TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO AMEND THE FY 21/22 BUDGET AS REQUESTED. SECONDED BY AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

##### **B. FY 22/23 Budget Adoption**

A MOTION WAS MADE BY AKIL ROSS TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE THE FY 22/23 BUDGET AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

##### **C. City of Columbia Sewer Easement Request (Seven Oaks Park)**

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MICHAEL CROMER TO ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO GRANT THE SEVEN OAKS PARK EASEMENT TO THE CITY OF COLUMBIA. SECONDED BY GARY BOYD. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

D. City of Columbia Sewer Easement Request (Saluda Shoals Park)

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MICHAEL CROMER TO GRANT STAFF AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE THE CITY OF COLUMBIA EASEMENT REQUEST FOR SALUDA SHOALS PARK. SECONDED BY AKIL ROSS.

Commissioner Ross opened discussion regarding Commission's responsibility in authorizing staff to sign a document prior to final legal review; Commission may want to consider holding a special call meeting once the final easement has been provided by City of Columbia and the agency's attorney has reviewed. Vice Chairman Boyd inquired if there has been a protocol established for this type of request. Mark Smyers stated that if the plan deviates away from what was presented to the Commission, staff does not have the authority to move forward; the plan is to act based on what was presented and there is no discretion for staff to do anything different. Commissioner Ross stated that the easement would come to staff from the City of Columbia and presented to the agency's attorney for legal review and oversight. Jay Downs shared that staff approached the City of Columbia to consider a change in the easement in order to reduce damage and avoid road closure; staff is presenting to the Commission tonight in order to expedite the process and avoid delay in the project. Commissioner Ross inquired if the Commission would need to sign anything regarding the easement. Jay Downs shared that staff would sign with the attorney present. Chairman Harmon inquired if staff normally sign easements. Jay Downs stated yes. Commissioner Cromer stated that if anything changes outside of what was presented, the Commission will need to review and approve the easement again. Commissioner Ross stated that the Commission will approve the easement presented and grant staff authorization to sign and execute.

VOTE TAKEN. VICE CHAIRMAN BOYD ABSTAINED. COMMISSIONER CROMER AND COMMISSIONER AKIL VOTED YES. MOTION PASSED.

E. Feasibility and Conceptual Plan Ratification

Mark Smyers communicated that staff sought and received Commission approval for short term bond monies; the dollars were to be allocated for property acquisitions. Mr. Smyers also stated that staff committed to present to the Commission any expenses associated with those dollars; staff is requesting Commission ratify an agreement to fund a study and conceptual plan to determine the feasibility of developing the property into a recreational camping facility.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY AKIL ROSS TO APPROVE THE RATIFICATION OF THE USE OF \$5000 FROM THE SHORT-TERM BOND FUND AND THE AGREEMENT TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH KBS ASSOCIATES TO COMPLETE A FEASIBILITY STUDY AND CONCEPTUAL PLAN. SECONDED BY GARY BOYD.

Discussion occurred regarding constructability of the property, zoning, floodway, feasibility, design, and conceptual plan. Vice Chairman Boyd inquired if the architects would recommend alternative park space or go beyond the original scope. Mark Smyers shared that the goal of the property is to be a profit generating facility and space to help offset the cost of the greenway trail. Jay Downs stated that anything

beyond the feasibility and conceptual plan for a campground would result in another contract and likely additional cost. Chairman Harmon inquired if KBS would offer additional information in relation to profitability. Jay Downs stated that KBS is strictly approaching the contract from an engineering standpoint.

VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

#### F. Saluda Shoals Splash Pad Design Build Contract

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GARY BOYD TO APPROVE STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO AWARD CAROLINA RECREATION THE CONTRACT TO REFURBISH THE SALUDA SHOALS PARK SPLASH PAD. SECONDED BY AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

#### G. Emergency Reserve

Chairman Harmon shared that the staff is recommending establishing a \$2M emergency reserve fund.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GARY BOYD TO APPROVE STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO ESTABLISH A \$2M EMERGENCY RESERVE FUND. SECONDED BY AKIL ROSS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.

### V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mark Smyers thanked Jay Downs for the presentation and update on the City of Columbia sewer project at Saluda Shoals Park. Mr. Smyers thanked the Commission for all their support in pursuing the new emergency reserve fund; this level of protection is what was missing and realized during COVID19. Mr. Smyers stated that period in the agency's history was some of the toughest times faced by staff and Commission; this kind of protection built within the agency's finances is truly appreciated.

Mr. Smyers provided an update on the progress regarding the Lower Saluda Greenway design and engineering; since receiving the approval of the funding from Lexington County, staff has been coordinating with the Lexington County, SCDOT, and the Central Midlands Council of Governments regarding the scope of work and ensuring ICRC maintains eligible for federal funding. Mark Smyers shared that staff may be able to begin advertising for services and hopefully kick off the development and planning documents this summer.

Mark Smyers also shared that staff are busy gearing up for what is looking like an active summer; staff have been closely watching and monitoring part-time staffing levels to ensure programs and activities are trending alongside the participation levels. Mr. Smyers stated he was happy to report that staff feel confident that hiring is on track (except for bus drivers). Mark Smyers shared that staff have done well to manage customer demand, while being short-handed, but that amount of effort has spread staff thin at times. Mr. Smyers also shared appreciation of the team for focusing on the recruiting endeavor; staff is the agency's number one resource; getting this back on track has been a significantly important focus.

Mark Smyers communicated that that on May 5<sup>th</sup>, ICRC got the chance to host phase II ribbon cutting for Leo's Landing Playground; many of the ideas for phase II began when the playground was first imagined, but it was not feasible to tackle in phase I. Mr. Smyers

shared that the public has continued to thoroughly enjoy it; and staff have received countless comments on how amazing it is and how impressed people are to have this kind of space in the community.

## **VI. COMMISSION RESPONSE**

Commissioner Ross echoed Mark Smyers remarks regarding the inclusive playground ribbon cutting. Commissioner Ross shared appreciation of staff's consideration of the park and ways to minimize the impact from the City of Columbia's sewer project. Commissioner Ross also shared appreciation of staff for creating an emergency reserve fund; it is a prudent thing to do. Commissioner Ross communicated that looking at the feasibility of bringing revenue generating facilities and programs is what is needed and applauded staff's efforts.

Vice Chairman Boyd stated that the community is fortunate to have such a professional staff; thanked Eve Mittendorf for the work on personnel policies; thanked Jay Downs for working closely with the City of Columbia on the sewer project; shared appreciation to John Cantey for taking the time to discuss and answer questions with the public and staff.

Commissioner Cromer thanked Jay Downs and his team for their hard work and stated that there are opportunities at Saluda Shoals Park after the sewer project is completed. Commissioner Cromer stated that the inclusive playground expansion and ribbon cutting event was phenomenal.

Chairman Harmon communicated that it is recognized staff were heavily involved in the inclusive playground event; it was great seeing the enthusiasm of the kids. Chairman Harmon also shared appreciation for staff's recommendation on creating an emergency reserve fund for the future and for being fiscally responsible of the taxpayers' monies. Chairman Harmon applauded staff for the special events such as Pickin and Piggins, for the building relationships and partnering with the disc golf group, Leo's Pride, and City of Columbia. Chairman Harmon thanked staff and asked that his appreciation be extended to all the staff.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY AKIL ROSS TO ADJOURN THE GENERAL SESSION.  
SECONDED BY MICHAEL CROMER. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION PASSED.**

There being no further business the General Session meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Eve Mittendorf  
Recording Secretary  
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION