

**IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING
WORK SESSION MINUTES**

Seven Oaks Park
February 23, 2011
6:30 p.m.

Members Attending: John Sowards, Scott Wilhide, Emily Shuman, Tom McLean, Bruce Loveless.
Non-members Attending: Elizabeth Taylor, Eve Mittendorf

Elizabeth Taylor communicated that John Hanson, Irmo Town Administrator, will present the Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendation final report to the Commission. Elizabeth Taylor distributed a letter from the Mayor of Irmo requesting use of the BC Components property for the Okra Strut; please note the date (October 15, 2011) on the letter is incorrect and was received in January of 2011. Discussion occurred regarding inability to make any formal commitments until the ICRC master plan is complete, investment (the first year) should be limited to cleaning-up the site, minimal preparation and access to electricity and water. Discussion also occurred regarding noise and citizen comments/concerns, potential location of festival on the BC Components property, amount of space needed and other current location options. Elizabeth Taylor stated there is no Commission action required at this time.

Ms. Taylor reviewed the agenda. Elizabeth Taylor also shared that DHEC continues to work with GE. In addition, their environmental staff will be on the property for a site visit and are continuing to work on the letter of agreement. A master planning pre-bid meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2011. Elizabeth Taylor, Bruce Loveless and Emily Shuman have partnered with the St. Andrews Arbor Day committee; Emily Shuman is the Chairman and Elizabeth Taylor is the Secretary. The first committee service project was the adoption and clean-up of a portion of St. Andrews Road. John Sowards asked Emily Shuman to give a brief overview of the St. Andrews Arbor Day committee during Commission response in the General Session. Discussion also occurred regarding Greenway trails and partnership opportunities with the Lexington Greenway Program.

The Work Session adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Eve Mittendorf

IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION

**IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING
GENERAL SESSION MINUTES**

Seven Oaks Park
February 23, 2011
7:00 p.m.

Non-members Attending

Elizabeth Taylor	Eve Mittendorf
Jack Terrell	Jeanette Wells
Belinda Rhodes	Jim Wellman
John Hanson	

Members Attending

John Sowards
Scott Wilhide
Emily Shuman
Tom McLean
Bruce Loveless

Chairman John Sowards called the meeting to order. John Sowards delivered the invocation. Guests were welcomed.

I. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A MOTION WAS MADE BY TOM MCLEAN TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. SCOTT WILHIDE SECONDED. VOTE TAKEN. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

II. 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.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A MOTION WAS MADE BY SCOTT WILHIDE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY TOM MCLEAN. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No public communications

V. PUBLIC PRESENTATION

A. Okra Strut Visioning Committee – John Hanson

Mr. Hanson distributed and presented a final report of the Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations. Chairman Sowards stated, for the record, that the letter dated October 2011 was just received by the Commission. Mr. Hanson shared the history, mission, current governance, and current location of the Okra Strut festival. In addition, Mr. Hanson communicated the Irmo Okra Strut Visioning Committee has made a recommendation to pursue approval by the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission for use of the old BC Components property as the future site of the Okra Strut festival and to open discussion regarding what conditions are required by the Commission.

Chairman Sowards shared his appreciation of Mr. Hanson presenting the recommendation and asked if any Commissioners had questions for Mr. Hanson. The Commissioners had no questions. Chairman Sowards communicated the Commission is very interested in continuing a dialogue with the Town of Irmo and Okra Strut Committee regarding use of the BC Components property. Chairman Sowards also shared that the Irmo Chapin

Recreation Commission is in the midst of a master plan, which is related to a strategic plan and vision for the BC Components property. In addition, it is important that the decision for property use is consistent with commitments made to park neighbors, that the property use meets any environmental requirements and that the property use creates good will in the community. Mr. Hanson stated he understood and agreed.

VI. STAFF REPORTS

Staff reports accepted as submitted.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. SC Dept of Agriculture Grant Application

Elizabeth Taylor shared a grant approval request for a SC Department of Agriculture mini-grant that will help to establish the Crooked Creek Park farmer's market; no matching funds are required. The farmer's market will also fulfill one of the agency's objectives in providing health and wellness programs in the community.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY SCOTT WILHIDE TO ACCEPT THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE GRANT APPLICATION AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY BRUCE LOVELESS. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy Fundraising Request

Elizabeth Taylor communicated that the Rhode Cup soccer festival fundraiser is an event that ICRC has hosted in the past; staff is requesting Commission approval.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY EMILY SHUMAN TO ACCEPT THE PARENT PROJECT MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY FUNDRAISING REQUEST AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY SCOTT WILHIDE. VOTE TAKEN. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Elizabeth Taylor reported working with DHEC and the responsible parties, regarding the contamination clean-up of the BC Components property, is progressing. The consultants hired by the responsible parties will be present on the property next week to evaluate the work that needs to be done; they have submitted a letter of agreement to excavate and fill in the capacitor dump on the property and plan to complete additional testing at the outfall ditches to further determine the scope of the work that needs to be done.

Chairman Sowards requested for the record that the minutes clearly reflect the comments regarding the environmental clean-up progress and posted on the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission website.

Ms. Taylor shared her question on where ICRC will be at the end of the process and the close of the voluntary clean-up contract; the goal is to have no restrictions on the property. Elizabeth Taylor stated that the environmental attorney, Marshall Taylor, agreed that is where the agency is headed.

Elizabeth Taylor also shared continued success and partnerships on health and wellness initiatives. ICRC and Lexington Richland School District V are working together on a Dam walk across the Lake Murray Dam, scheduled on March 5, 2011. John Cantey is working hard to ensure its success. In addition, ICRC has entered into an agreement with a non-profit group called "Girls on the Run," a national group that encourages pre-teen girls to develop healthy

lifestyles through running. The agreement provides opportunities for children in our afterschool programs. The therapeutic program presented their first murder mystery dinner theater; they played to a sold out crowd and received great reviews. The new score boards have been installed at the baseball fields; participants have shared positive feedback on that improvement. Staff is grateful to Palmetto Health for funding that purchase.

Elizabeth Taylor shared the biggest challenge to staff is field availability; the fields at the Chapin complex are temporarily out of commission because of electrical problems; the baseball complex at Irmo Elementary has been demolished; the high schools have added lacrosse as a sanction sport, which increases field use at the Irmo Middle School complex. As a result, users are clamoring for field space. Last, the Foundation is preparing for the Oyster Roast at Saluda Shoals Park and anticipating 350 guests and over 100 auction items.

Bruce Loveless commended Elizabeth Taylor on continuing her work with DHEC regarding the BC Components property. Chairman Sowards requested Ms. Taylor prepare a letter to Senator Knotts for his involvement and assistance during the environmental process. Bruce Loveless recognized Representative Chip Huggins' assistance during the process. Chairman Sowards directed Ms. Taylor to send a letter to Representative Huggins expressing the Commission's appreciation.

IX. COMMISSION RESPONSE

Emily Shuman shared an update on the St. Andrews Arbor Day committee; the community day project was successful. Ms. Shuman also encouraged the Commissioners to attend the Oyster Roast on Sunday, February 27, 2011. Bruce Loveless commended Emily Shuman and Elizabeth Taylor on their commitment and community spirit towards the St. Andrews Arbor Day and Irmo Arbor Day efforts. Chairman Sowards requested the Okra Strut Visioning Committee final report be included in the minutes for public record.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY TOM MCLEAN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. SECONDED BY SCOTT WILHIDE. VOTE TAKEN. MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Eve Mittendorf
IRMO CHAPIN RECREATION COMMISSION

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Final Report



Presented:

Irmo Town Council Meeting
December 7, 2010

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Committee Members	Attendance
Nanette Dutler	8
Jay Downs	8
Bob Janiske	4
Judy Johnson	7
Ron Joye	1
Kirk Luther	9
Snot Sheely	9
Larry Slaughter	9
Jim Twitty	9
Facilitator	
Elizabeth Taylor	9

At the request of Irmo Town Council, Mayor John Gibbons, and Town Administrator John Hanson, the **2010 Okra Strut Visioning Committee** began work in June 2010, for the purpose of creating a vision for the future of the Irmo Okra Strut. Over the course of a four month period the committee met nine times and considered four areas of interest regarding the event; **mission, programming, location and governance**. The recommendations set forth in this report are based on an open process of collaborative thinking, decision-making and input from all those who were present. The recommended plan is designed to provide a **conceptual framework** for the future operations and success of the Irmo Okra Strut as a vital element of our community's identity and quality of life.

Mission

On July 12, 2010, the committee unanimously voted to adopt the following mission statement. The mission defined below provides the framework for the recommended plan and should remain flexible over time so as to ensure that it continues to reflect the needs of the community.

The purpose of the Irmo Okra Strut is to promote a sense of community by producing a signature family festival for all ages that showcases local talent, businesses, non-profit organizations and the greater Irmo area.

Programming

Programming for the Irmo Okra Strut should reflect the values expressed in the mission statement. Activities should attract families and children, promote local businesses, support non-profit organizations and showcase local talent. It was agreed that there is great opportunity to expand activities over a week-long period that will engage and promote businesses and showcase talent. The program evaluation process included extensive discussion regarding a broad scope of programming possibilities. Program ideas were grouped in four categories: attractions, events, entertainment, and competitions and then prioritized by value.

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Event Type	Event Description	Business	Family	Kids	Opening Weekend	Weekday	Closing Weekend
Attractions	Community and Commercial Exhibits	X	X		Critical		
	Carnival/Amusements			X	Critical		
	Arts and Crafts Exhibits	X	X		Critical	Preferred	Critical
	Kids Crafts Booth			X	Critical	Preferred	Critical
	Okra Theme		X		Critical		
	Petting Zoo			X	Not Nec		
	Fine Arts	X	X		Not Nec		Critical
	Foods that Showcase Local Restaurants	X	X		Critical	Critical	Critical
	Ice Skating		X	X	Preferred	Preferred	
	NASCAR Promotion		X		Preferred		
	Static Displays	X	X	X	Critical	Critical	Critical
Events	Great Okra Giveaway	X	X	X	Critical		
	Parade	X	X	X	Critical		
	Street Dance				Critical		
	Showcase/Tour of Homes		X		Preferred	Preferred	Preferred
	Mystery Auction	X			Not Nec		
	Scavenger Hunt for business	X	X	X	Critical	Critical	Critical
	Sports Events		X	X		Critical	
	Concert / Lecture Series		X			Preferred	
	Faith-based Community Activity	X	X	X	Critical	Critical	Critical
Entertainment	Concerts - Local and Military Bands		X	X	Critical		Critical
	Celebrity Appearances		X	X	Preferred		
	Youth and Adult Performances		X	X	Critical	Critical	Critical
	Multiple Staging				Critical		
	Fireworks		X	X	Preferred		
Competitions	Okra Eating Contest		X	X	Critical		
	Count the Pods			X	Critical		
	Kiss the Goat			X	Preferred		
	Okra Growing Contest		X	X	Preferred		
	Simon Says Contest		X	X	Preferred		
	Comhole Contest		X		Critical		
	Children's Games			X	Critical		
	Beauty Contest		X	X		Preferred	
	Cooking Contest	X	X	X	Preferred		

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Fishing Contest		X	X	Preferred	
Fine Arts	X	X			Preferred
Battle of the Bands		X	X	Critical	
Irmo's Got Talent		X	X	Critical	
Family Games and Contests		X	X	Critical	

Auxiliary Events

Through the years valuable auxiliary events have developed around the Irmo Okra Strut. These events have contributed to the visibility of Irmo and add value to the festival. Management of the Okra Strut should encourage and support these activities as they have helped to strengthen the sense of community that the Irmo Okra Strut is meant to bolster. A list of previous or potential events has been provided below.

Auxiliary Events							
5K Dam Run (St. Andrews Rotary)							
Golf Tournament (Kiwanis)							
Carolina Cyclists Bike Race							
Chamber Dignitary Brunch (Irmo Chamber of Commerce)							
Okra Bowling Tournament							
Palmetto Esprit de Corp							
Irmo/Dutch Fork High Cass Reunions							
Lake Murray Dam Swim							

Partnerships

The Committee recognizes that partnerships are essential to the future success of the Irmo Okra Strut. These potential partnerships range from organizations that contribute to programming, volunteerism, static displays, equipment or facilities to those that could potentially contribute to management, staffing, promotion and sponsorship. These potential partners have been identified in the table below.

Potential Partnerships							
Young Chefs Academy							
World Affairs Council							
Rotary Club of Irmo Lake Murray							
Irmo Chapin Commission							
Shriners							
Lake Murray Irmo Women's Club							
Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce							
School Districts							
Ministerial Association							
Optimist Clubs							
Town of Irmo							
Local Fire and Safety							
Palmetto Richland Health							

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Lexington Medical Center							
Hemingways							
Armed Services/Army Navy							
Seven Oaks Art League							
Plex							
Anchor Lanes							
Midlands Tech							
YMCA							
Richland Cty Recreation Commission							
Lake Murray Tourism							
Clemson Extension							
Farmers Market							
Hospitality Association							
SCE&G							
Non-profits							
Banks or Businesses							
Arbor Day							

Location

In approaching the issue of site identification, the committee created a list of preferred site specifications and evaluated suggested sites. A prioritized list of potential future sites was then produced. Twelve sites were considered for core activities of the festival and five areas were listed as support sites for auxiliary activities surrounding the core event. Suggested sites were evaluated for event suitability using the defined desired specifications. Based on this evaluation, the BC Components property was identified as the most desirable site. A visit was made to further evaluate the potential for this site during which committee confirmed this as the group's first choice. It is recommended that approval to hold the Irmo Okra Strut on this site should be pursued for 2011. There is no implied owner approval put forward by the committee's recommendation of future site preference.

The top four preferences for future site locations listed in order of preference are:

1. BC Components site (five acres formerly used as a dog park)
2. Seven Oaks Park /Leisure Lane Corridor
3. Pivotal Fitness Shopping Center
4. Seven Oaks Shopping Center

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Location	5-10 Acres	1500 Parking Spaces	Flat Green Space w/ hard surface mix	Rectangular / Square	Park Like	Electrical Infrastructure	Water	Screening for Service Vehicles	Greater Irmo/St. Andrews Corridor/Hwy 60	Gated / Limited # of Access Points	Access to Emergency Vehicles	Multi purpose	Headquarters / Storage Building	Sensitive to Noise Issues	Alcohol Sales
Walmart	X	X		X							X			X	X
Riverland Hills	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X		X	
Palmetto Health Campus															
Pivotal Fitness	X	X		X		X	X		X		X			X	X
Seven Oaks Shopping Ctr	X	X		X		X	X		X		X			X	X
Piggly Wiggly															
BC Components	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X		X	X
Seven Oaks Park	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Anchor Lanes	X			X		X	X		X	X	X			X	X
Irmo Town Park	X		X	X	X	X	X		X						X
Saluda Shoals Park	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Shaw Industries	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Crossroads (parade staging)															
Harbison Theater															
Businesses															
Schools															
Restaurants															

Governance

The Committee studied the current structure of the Irmo Okra Strut as provided below. The financial viability of the current operation was examined as the group reviewed ten years of audit information provided by John Hanson, Town Administrator. The current structure has not provided for profitability of the festival in the recent past. This issue was noted as an area of concern.

Current structure

- The Town of Irmo purchased the Irmo Okra Strut in 1981 from the Lake Murray/Irmo Women's Club.
- Seven Irmo Okra Strut Commissioners are appointed by Town Council to three-year staggered terms. There are no term limits. The by-laws allow for an unlimited number of non-voting members. Currently three non-voting members serve.
- There is a residency requirement that Commissioners must reside within the Lexington/Richland Five School District.
- Officers provided for in the by-laws include:
Chairman/Vice Chair/Sec/Treasurer
Note: There is no current Sec/Treasurer
Officers are elected in November.
- An annual meeting is held in November for the purpose of reporting the results of the current year's festival and making recommendations for upcoming year activities.
- Budgetary authority is held by the Town of Irmo. An annual budget is approved as a part of the town's budget each spring.
- The Commission has \$1500 spending authority without prior approval of Town Council.
- Check signing authority is held by the Town Administrator/Mayor/and one council member.
- There is currently a paid part-time administrator.

Two alternatives to the current structure were examined and evaluated as options for the future.

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Option 1

- *The Irmo Okra Strut could function as an independent non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors.*

Advantages

Independent mission/governance
Inclusive of broader range of groups
Singularity of purpose
Business experience

Disadvantages

Start up costs
Loss of safety net
Lack of experience as an organization
Loss of economy of scale
Possible limited viability
Absence of paid staff

Option 2

- *The Irmo Okra Strut could function as a non-profit component unit of a larger organization such as:*

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission
Town of Irmo
Lake Murray/Irmo Women's Club
Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce

Advantages

Established non-profit status
Support network of parent org
Cross promotion
Insurance
Office space
Visibility
Paid staff

Disadvantages

Restricted to the mission of the parent organization
Potential conflict of interests
Adds an additional layer of governance
Loss of director appointment authority

The Committee recommends the following:

January 2011 Irmo Town Council establish an Irmo Okra Strut Board of Directors to be made up of (but not limited to) representatives of identified stakeholder partners: Town of Irmo, the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission, the Lake Murray/Irmo Women's Club and the Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce.

The purpose of this Board will be to establish a nonprofit corporate structure and business plan that will support the future success of the Irmo Okra Strut as a signature community festival that promotes Irmo and financially supports community improvements.

October 2011 Upon successfully establishing legal non-profit status and creating a sound business plan approved by Irmo Town Council, responsibility for achieving the programmatic and financial goals of the Irmo Okra Strut will be officially assumed by the Board. Financial support from Irmo

Okra Strut Visioning Committee Recommendations

Town Council as well as substantial sponsorship dollars will be required in order to realize the mission of the festival.

Summary

In summary, the Irmo Okra Strut Visioning Committee concluded that the Irmo Okra Strut is an essential element of community identity to the Greater Irmo Area and has great opportunity for growth.

In addition to the current core activities of the street dance, parade and Saturday events, it is recommended that partner administered, festival-related programming be expanded to span an entire week. This will encourage business participation and will allow for a variety of activities promoting community awareness over an extended period of time. Consideration should be given to moving the street dance to Saturday, creating a single all day event.

The Town of Irmo should pursue approval to move the festival to the former BC Components property owned by the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission for 2011. This site offers most of the preferred site specification requirements that were identified by the committee.

The Committee proposes that the structure of the Irmo Okra Strut take the form of a free standing, non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors. Membership should represent partner stakeholders identified as the Town of Irmo, the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission, the Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce and the Irmo/Lake Murray Women's Club. Transition should take place over the course of the next 12 months and under the supervision of Council who would be responsible for approving a non-profit application as well as a business plan that will support the future viability of the festival.