

Piedmont Conservation Council, Inc.

Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2010

Members Present: Bill Alston, Chairman (Randolph), Alex Ashton, Vice-Chair (Guilford), Larry Baker (Rockingham), George Bain (Randolph), Eddie Culberson (Chatham, Durham) Frank Green (Rockingham), Herb Hendrickson (Guilford), Rudy Langley (Guilford), Millie Langley (Guilford), Talmage Layton (Durham), Rick McVey (Caswell), Norton Webster (Wake), Julie Elmore, Carol Melton.

Members Absent: Shaunnika Johnson (Wake), Janet MacFall (Alamance), Jarvis Martin (Durham), Hazel Pucket (Rockingham), David Stancil (Orange), Brenda Sutton (Rockingham), C. Hester Vernon (Caswell), Brenda Williams (Chatham).

Guests: Lynnette Batt, American Rivers

I. Call to order

Bill Alston called to order the regular meeting of the Piedmont Conservation Council, Inc (PCC) at 6:00 p.m. on October 21 2010 At Alamance Community College.

II. Chairman Comments

III. Approval of minutes from July 1, 2010 meeting

Minutes from July 1, 2010 were read.

DISCUSSION: Add budget issues that Pam McKimmon had revised and sent out to the board by email.

MOTION: Alex Ashton made motion to approve at noted above. Motion was seconded by Talmage Layton.

VOTE: Unanimously approved.

IV. Dam Removal Opportunities in the Piedmont

Lynnette Batt, Executive Director from American Rivers Southeast Region gave a history and overview of American Rivers as it was founded in 1973 in South Carolina. She came to discuss the more local Southeast Region including North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia established in 2007. Lynette described river restoration benefits by efforts to dams, to improve clean water, river flows and fish and wildlife habitat. American Rivers also initializes programs to remove small dams in the Southeast when their impacts outweigh their public benefits. American Rivers is forming partnerships with land trust and other local groups to create Blue Trails, the river equivalent to hiking trails, as an innovative way to protect clean water and critical riverside lands, while promoting river recreation, sustainable economic development and community pride. The NC Dam Safety Office State Inventory in 2009 showed 5,452 total dams, with 1,245 having a high hazard status within North Carolina. Lynnette showed examples of projects and how a river changes back to its natural operation after dam is removed.

Lynnette described three “take home” important points:

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1. Dams are a huge problem to water quality, they block species movement, trap nutrients, disrupts connectivity between floodplains, creates unhealthy aquatic environment, and blocks normal flow transport of sediments.
2. Dam removal has huge benefits to restore natural river to get the “biggest bang for the buck” including, returns the river to working naturally in its complexity of a healthy environment for water quality, wildlife, aquatics species, recreational benefits and community revitalization.
3. Dams targeted for removal are ones that are no long being used.

Lynnette explained some of the incentives for dam owners are economics, safety and liability. The cost of repairing a damn is 3 to 10 times the cost of removal. River protection, blue trail program were described as incentives as well. American Rivers programs provide leadership, technical assistance, 50 years of experience, 250 dam removal projects around country, approximately 4,000 mile river miles reconnected in very selective areas.

Lynnette described the NOAA community based restoration grant program setup to assist with dam removal or other water barrier removal projects that benefit migratory fish. Currently looking for applications for this program with historic spawning habitat.

Lynnette shared list of projects around the state and displayed pictures of before and after projects.

Lynnette reviewed an upcoming project called Lassiter Mill in the Pee Dee River basin, working with PCC thru NOAA. Just got permission to begin the project from property owner who owns 800 acres next to the Uwharrie National Forest. Owner can't afford to restore the mill building and they are going to donate it for another project. This project will open up approximately 18 miles of stream flow.

The board discussed issues about who owns the land once it's drained; measures taken to monitor if there are toxins in sediments, historical values researched, whether preserving some of dam could be done, providing signage and placards, aesthetics after dam removed, property values next to free flowing water bodies are higher, requiring easements to keep from altering removal efforts. Julie added that American Rivers has direct partnership with NOAA and access to grants that we don't have.

Julie will be working with Lynette on the application materials for PCC to approve at the next meeting. To write a grant for the first phase “Design Phase” which would be followed by seeking a second grant for phase two to do the Construction. The board thanked Lynnette for the information provided.

V. Discussion Items:

a. Recruitment

Julie asked the council to remember that there are still vacancies that need to be filled and suggested that recruitment efforts could begin with everyone networking among their contacts. Need, one for Alamance and Caswell; two from Durham, one more from Orange and maybe one more in Chatham, Brenda may not be able to serve because of the 6:00 start time. We need diversity on the board, as well as possibly someone with expertise in the areas of an attorney and a project manager.

b. New Council Employees Opportunities (FabLab project)

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Julie reported that a job description will be going out soon. Hopefully based out of Durham office thanks to Eddie for space. We could have top candidate attend the January meeting.

c. Area Plan/Strategic Plan

Julie reported that Ashley Abernathy worked on a five-year strategic plan and completed the survey but the goals and objectives aren't finished. We will be discussing these at the January meeting.

Resource conservation is a broad goal. Members discussed specific forecasting challenges, making sure all projects fit into one of the objectives, stormwater as a way to do watershed restoration, job creation, and community outreach.

d. New RC&D Manual

Julie noted that members had received the new federal policy RC&D manual by email and asked if anyone wanted a paper copy. Larry Baker asked for a paper copy. It has a few new additions, NRCS Annual Assessment requirement that the executive board proposed to add to PCC by-laws.

e. By-laws (add section 513.44 of RC&D Manual)

Julie presented a Notice of Proposed Changes to the by-laws, regarding a new RC&D regulation that an audit is required by NRCS and will be an incurred cost to PCC. Any changes to the by-laws require 30 day prior notification to the council before a vote can be held. Members were asked to let Julie know of any comments and a vote would be held at the January 2011 meeting.

Members discussed costs of CPA firms and the possibility of changing firms. Julie reported that the current financial review has just been done and offered to have a speaker at a future meeting. Alex asked Julie to explore School of Government for a recommendation of a financial firm with non-profit expertise.

f. Business – approve invoices from contractors

Julie presented invoices that needed to be approved for payment:

1. National Association dues \$450.00
2. Painting Supplies for NC Quilt Trail, \$305.11 (approved with comment to Quilters Guild representative to get future expenses pre-approved by Julie);
3. Unique Places \$6,000.00 (approved pending receiving final maps);
4. Conservation FRPP Easements Reviews-Dick Fowler \$588.00 (approved);
5. Clean Energy Durham \$1500.00 (approved).
6. R.J. Goldstein 2 invoices of \$6,375.00 each.

Julie reminded that PCC pays invoices once reimbursements are received from grant funds.

MOTION: Eddie Culberson motioned approval with above comments. Seconded by McVey.

VOTE: Unanimously approved.

VI. Updates

- a. South Eastern Conference- Julie reported attending RC&D South Eastern Conference in Mississippi to share information and ideas. Next year SEC will be in Alabama. Julie toured gulf coast states, and saw no oil damage, other tours looked at community development in New Orleans. Julie reported one presentation on controlling invasive species with goats and will provide more information at a later time. The board discussed

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ways to raise money with a similar project. Based on the projects Julie saw at the conference, PCC's upcoming projects are award winning.

- b. Project Updates - Julie congratulated the council on receiving the Alamance Community College Storm water project from CWMTF for \$350,000.00; secondly we got CWMTF for Orange Co Stanford Middle School for A\$355,430.00.
- c. CWMTF had \$297 million in requests but only 67 mil, PCC ranked 6th and we got 5% of what they had to give out County CW Stanford and the City of Franklinville that Julie wrote a grant for as well.

We're 90% confident that we are getting the FabLab trailer; then we have to send somebody to Boston to get trained on the equipment by the end of January. We'll need to figure out a way to get the trailer here and we're looking for corporate sponsorship on how to get it around to the various communities in the Piedmont. We need to get the FabLab coordinator hired by first of December and start coordinating with towns and communities who might want this opportunity, such as school systems. People can go in and see what it makes and use the equipment for projects for small business opportunities, job creation, creating a community using technology. Julie has talked to small business tech center in Rockingham and they think a local bank will sponsor a \$1,000.00 to pay for the cost of hauling the trailer around and possibly a fund raiser for PCC. The board said it's also a good way for PCC to get visibility in the community and we need to have a banner on the trailer, part-time person(s) with specific skills on operating the trailer as well as the lab itself. We'll have a signup sheet; FabLab to be at American Tobacco for interim. Members discussed contracting someone to drive it around, making sure we know what type of trailer hitch hookup is needed, weight of trailer to determine type of license on the vehicle pulling it, the trailer under MIT liability insurance.

The Piedmont Quilt Trail has started and we have five potential barn sites lined up as a trial projects in Randolph County. We plan to post application process before Thanksgiving for families to consider over the holidays, with application due around January 4th for decision. If we have more applications than we can pay for, we'll have a ranking system to choose. The idea is to get the Quilt Trail started in the Randolph and expanded through the Piedmont. Cost estimates on website for quilt trail that is really a way for PCC to have a website with a Quilt Trail and other project components.

- d. Open Floor – no additional discussions.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:05p.m.

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