



Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission (ORG) Meeting Minutes

Date: March 19, 2024, In-Person/WebEx Meeting

Commission Members Present in-Person: Charlie Barrow, Ross Hinkle, Susie Haggard, Ed Maioriello, Lexy Doherty, Bryan Varin, Kristen Linthicum, Jennifer Gay.

On-line:

Commission Members Absent: John Schelhas, Alison McCullick.

Ex-officio Members and Visitors Attending: Rose West (ACC Leisure Services), Stephanie Greene (ACC Sustainability Office), Daniel Sizemore (Transportation and Public Works), Hugh Ogle (Public Utilities), Scott Long, (Bike Athens), Bruno Giri (Upper Oconee Watershed Network).

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 3:07. A quorum was established.

Public Comments: No public comments to report.

Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes made by Ed Maioriello. The commission unanimously approved the minutes.

Chair Report – Barrow

Voted to approve two new members last week, Bruno Giri and Mack Duncan. Charlie and Rose submitted the letter. Mayor and Commission have not voted yet.

Ticket to Ride coming up this weekend. There are four complimentary tickets. Lexy will use the tickets.

GreenLife Awards April 24, 6-8 pm at Botanical Gardens. Karen Porter will get Walt Cook Award. ORGC can set up a table or tent.

Clarke County government holding information sessions on land use plan. Charlie will attend one meeting to highlight the Greenway Network Plan. One meeting is next Tuesday at Creature Comforts. We submitted a letter earlier, but that was for the Future Land Use Plan, This is the Comprehensive Use Plan. Charlie will send a letter.

Lexy is interested in switching to chairing Natural Resource Committee from outreach. Motion to approve passed.

Vice Chair Report – Hinkle

No major update. Did talk to Karen Porter and she will continue working with the Nature Guide. She is scheduling a walk with Linda Chafin. Nature Guide is in a between-semester lull. Next semester it will get going on it again.

Charlie: Tom Keene emailed about School of Social Work site. He is interested in historical signs across the river. School of Social Work interested in historical ecology along Greenway. Lots of support on ORGC for human/environment history.

Treasurer/Budget Report –

Nothing has changed. Firefly Trail will invoice later this week.

Committee Reports

Planning – Haggard

No report.

Rose: Spend 3 to 4 hours formatting network plan. Working on it, finished 2.5 or 3 chapters. Should have it available for editing in about a month to six weeks. Alex should have copies of previous edits; Rose has Alex's old files so may be able to find this. Ross will willing look at that with Rose. Susie: It will be good to set up a meeting and go through it once we have the electronic copy.

Natural Resources – Doherty

Future Land Use plan session. Survey is open until April 30.

Maycourt Survey. Regional transportation. We should give input on that. Doherty will share links.

Talked with Jesse Houle about water policy update. They don't always realize there is something they need to do when we send a letter, so it is important to identify actions to be taken in letters.

Communication and Outreach – Doherty

Staff Reports

Leisure Services – West

The new invitations are not quite ready to go out, but the ribbon cutting for Carr's Creek will be April 16, 11 am.

Some work going by Public Utilities on in area along MLK. Should be done sometime this week.

Trail Ambassador Program is getting low on some supplies. ORGC may want to consider funding this. We are in favor of supporting as a part of our education mission. She should give us a specific list.

Upcoming Programs: There is a reservation website list that you can get to via ACCgov.com/trails. Place on the left with programming. Talk on Coyotes May 10th. Nature Center accessible bird walk May 4. Jane McPherson, School of Social Work on May 4. Spring Family Fun Ride on April 23.

Sustainability Office – Greene

We have two new interpretive signs in the ground: (1) A Chimney Swift one behind bathrooms a Dudley. (2) One at the Purple Martin nests on Mulberry Street. There will be another Purple Martin box at MLK. Three new Chimney Swift towers are standing at MLK, not quite finished. Two chickadees nesting in bluebird boxes now. People have stopped messing with bluebird boxes, although one has been stolen. We will be installing fence to demark boundaries in MLK Park to establish very clear boundary to stop piling of debris on county land. Tentatively hoping to help Nature Center folks this Thursday to burn area in front of parking lot.

Planning – Prichard

Wick not able to make it. Nothing to report.

Transportation and Public Works (TPW) – Sizemore

Introduced new Vision Zero specialist: Katie Goodrum. Started in February. Grew up in Athens, and is an urban planner. She is looking forward to getting to know all the county's transportation and safety project.

Grants: Will apply for a Safe Streets for All Demonstration Grant, which will enable them to pilot some interventions and technologies. Things like trying out new trail counters would be eligible. Christine is looking into new trail counters so there is support for this. Counts will have to inform safety action plan. Put together one page proposal. Three deadlines. Won't make April Deadline, but there is one in May.

Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program ATIIP. New program to construct projects that provide community connectivity to active transportation facilities and networks. E.g., Middle Oconee Greenway. Requires 20% match, but not required if it majority of census tracts affected have over 40% poverty. Will meet with Athens in Motion for this.

Just got a Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods \$800,000 planning grant for Oglethorpe and Hawthorne. Can explore connections into Beech Haven. Proposal needs to come from Leisure Services if it involves the Greenway.

Susie: Realignment of Cook's Trail where it is now closed. Would that be eligible?
Daniel: This funds concept plans, not design. Number one factor is if it will provide bike and foot ways for connectivity. Might have to allow bikes. Both southern and norther section needs some work. Bike activity have been tearing up Cooks Trail. Cooks Trail is part of the Greenway.

Public Utilities – Ogle

Got work at MLK and Strickland, got the line installed underneath and should restore the trail back to normal tomorrow. Still progressing with Sanford Stadium. Temporary set up for detouring traffic will be in place soon. It will be discussed by Mayor and Commission tonight.

Other Ex Officio Reports

Bike Athens – Long

Friend of the Greenway will be going forward and not dissolving Submitted list of 11 new board members, current board will vote on new board members.

UOWN – Giri

Not present. Question was raised as to whether Windham is going to be the liaison, or will Giri do this along with being a Commissioner.

Firefly Trail – Keene

Not present.

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) – Maioriello

Will share bird walk schedule and will be reaching out to all places we go to. Will be one at the Nature Center and one at E23 parking lot on Oconee Access Road. Will involve birding the Carr's Creek section.

Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

New Business

Next ORGC meeting: April 16 at 3 pm at Memorial Park.

Adjourn