

**TOWN OF BLUFFTON MAY RIVER WATERSHED ACTION PLAN ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**
Orlando Conference Room, Town Hall
Thursday, September 28th, 2023

Present: Stan Rogers, Chair; Al Stokes, Vice-Chair; Chris Shoemaker; Amber Kuehn;
Jessie White

Absent: Larry Toomer

Staff: Beth Lewis; Bill Baugher; Nicole Wright

Guest: Will Howard; Mike Hughes

Media: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

1. Mr. Rogers, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM.

**II. NOTICE REGARDING POSTING OF MEETING PER SOUTH CAROLINA FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION (FOIA) REQUIREMENTS**

III. ROLL CALL AND CONFIRMATION OF QUORUM

1. Members introduced themselves.

IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

1. Mr. Stokes moved to adopt the Agenda as presented. Mr. Shoemaker seconded the motion. Unanimous ayes.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Adoption of August 24th, 2023 Minutes

Mr. Stokes moved to adopt the July 27, 2023, Minutes. Mr. Shoemaker seconded the motion. Unanimous ayes.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Consideration of WAPAC Strategic Plan Priorities for FY25-26 – Beth Lewis, Water Quality Program Manager

Ms. Lewis facilitated discussion of the previous Strategic Plan Priority the committee had made. The committee decided they wanted to not edit the current Strategic Plan Priorities and roll them over for the next fiscal year as long as they were listed out in the Strategic Plan. Ms. White moved for WAPAC to recommend the list of Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Strategic Plan Priorities as discussed. Ms. Kuehn seconded the motion. Unanimous ayes.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Development of the Strategic Plan Priority Five (5) to Establish an Agreement with Beaufort County to Implement the May River Watershed Action Plan

within the County's Jurisdiction of the Watershed for Both Structural Stormwater Projects and Non-Structural Programs such as Implementing the Green Print Map within the Rural & Critical Lands Program - Beth Lewis, Water Quality Program Manager

The committee began discussing what the goals for this priority would be. They first reviewed the Green Space Memorandum the committee wrote and put forward to Town Council in April of 2023 (attachment 1) that recommended the formation of a Green Space Policy and Program within the Town of Bluffton to see what overlap may be present between the two priorities. The committee decided their goal for this priority is to get Beaufort County to agree to formally follow the May River Watershed Action Plan and implement some of the programs and projects laid out within it. One of those programs is to increase septic to sewer conversion within the County. Mr. Baugher explained the methods and programs the Town uses to try and increase the amount of sewer connections within its jurisdiction. The committee requested further information on which areas within the Town and County have already converted to sewer, and Mr. Baugher said he would work on gathering that information for them and he would reach out to a representative at Beaufort County to come and speak about their sewer conversion program. The committee also requested Mr. Baugher present on the current Town's Stormwater and MS4 program as well as the land ordinances that exist within the Town.

IX. DISCUSSION

No Discussion

X. ADJOURNMENT

Unanimous decision to adjourn at 4:28 P.M. Next Meeting: October 26, 2023 @ 3:00 P.M. in the Town of Bluffton Council Chambers.

Attachments:

1. Green Space Memorandum



MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Council

FROM: Stan Rogers, Chair, May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC)

RE: WAPAC Recommendation to Establish a Town of Bluffton Green Space Policy and Program

DATE: JANUARY 26, 2023

CC: Stephen Steese, Town Manager
Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager
Kim Washok-Jones, Director of Projects & Watershed Resilience
Bill Baugher, Watershed Management Division Manager
Beth Lewis, Water Quality Program Administrator

As voted on during the January 26, 2023, meeting, WAPAC hereby recommends that the Town of Bluffton develop a Green Space Policy and Program to protect and restore shellfish harvesting and water quality in the May River and achieve broader community and conservation benefits and address growth challenges. The Town's policy and program should:

- Create a land preservation, conservation and/or development rights purchasing and retiring program to meet goals of the May River Watershed Action Plan and achieve broader community and conservation benefits beyond the scope of the May River Watershed Action Plan;
- Develop program framework and guidance for prospective partners and participants;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities across Town of Bluffton Departments and within the Projects and Watershed Resilience Department to achieve the greatest efficiency and impact;
- Establish funding mechanisms within the Town of Bluffton's annual budget process;
- Identify and pursue external funding opportunities such as federal, state, and other local government programs and grants;
- Identify key federal, state, and local partners to implement the program;

- Establish criteria to identify and prioritize prospective properties for conservation and protection consistent with Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Lands Program;
- Develop, integrate, and socialize tools such as geographic information system (GIS) layers to:
 - Overlay Beaufort County Green Print Plan maps, South Carolina Conservation Bank maps, and other accredited land trust mapping tools with the Town of Bluffton land use maps;
 - Use associated model outputs that target possible Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project areas to improve water quality; and
- Provide comprehensive outreach of the program including policy and guidance, and the benefits of participation to landowners and developers.

If implemented, WAPAC believes, a Green Space Policy and Program will help achieve May River Watershed Action Plan objectives.