



**HEALTH, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 15, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

The Health, Social, and Environmental Affairs Committee conducted a meeting on July 15, 2025 at the Busby Street Community Center, 1735 Busy Street, Columbia, SC 29203. The Honorable Aditi Bussells, Chair called the meeting to order at 11:16 a.m. and the following members were present:

| Attendee Name | Title | Status |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Aditi Bussells | Chair | Present |
| Edward H. McDowell | Member | Present |
| Tyler D. Bailey | Member | Present |

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of May 27, 2025 Health, Social, and Environmental Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved

Upon a motion made by Mr. McDowell and seconded by Mr. Bailey, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the May 27, 2025 Health, Social, and Environmental Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes.

PRESENTATIONS

2. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Update – Mr. Jory Fleming, CPRG Planning Grant Manager; Mr. Gregory Spouse, Director of Research, Planning, and Development; and Ms. Jocelyn Falkenstine, CPRG Implementation Grant Manager/ Central Midlands Council of Governments – Received as information.

Ms. Jocelyn Falkenstine, CRPG Implementation Grant Manager/ Central Midlands Council of Governments presented updates on the fully obligated \$8.7 million S3 Fund grant, which runs from November 2024 to November 2029. Phase 1 includes eight solar and smart surface projects, including a major solar installation at the Columbia Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant. The project is expected to yield a 10-year return on investment and a 30-year lifespan. She highlighted potential tax credit impacts from recent federal legislation and a projected timeline.



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There was discussion about the July 2026 deadline to secure a 40% solar tax credit; interconnection delays with Dominion Energy; the project's potential to reduce energy costs and air pollution; and a future pilot project for cool pavement, guided by existing heat-mapping data.

3. Beat the Heat, Plant a Tree: The Sequel – Mr. Brian Neiger, Forestry and Beautification Superintendent

Mr. Brian Neiger, Forestry and Beautification Superintendent provided an update on the original Beat the Heat, Plant a Tree grant. The goal was to give away 1,500 trees in Justice40 neighborhoods within five years and educate residents about the importance of trees. Columbia Green also wanted to give away 250 trees in non-Justice 40 areas within city limits. During the first six months, 990 trees were delivered and \$43,100 was expended. The grant was canceled in February 2025. However, Columbia Green has decided to continue the program. He outlined Columbia Green's proposed commitment and the City of Columbia's responsibilities.

There was discussion about tree removal along I-26; expenditure of grant funding; funding for the sequel; the canopy program; and the removal and replacement of Bradford pear trees.

There was consensus of the Committee to move forward with Beat the Heat, Plant a Tree: The Sequel.

4. Bee City USA Initiative – Ms. Mary Pat Baldauf, Sustainability Facilitator – Endorsed for City Council Consideration

Ms. Samantha Cornell, Public Works Department intern presented an overview of the Bee City USA initiative. She shared the proposed committee structure, annual resolution requirements, and the environmental benefits of promoting pollinator-friendly practices. She emphasized the program's role in biodiversity, sustainable land management, and community engagement.

There was discussion about signage; pollinator friendly plants; fellow Bee-City municipalities; and the resolution.



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There was also discussion about pending agenda items to include an update on gateway signage; scheduling an autonomous robot demonstration and a Finlay Park tour; update on the Three Rivers Greenway and Animal Services; and revisiting a potential Night Market discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC, CPM
City Clerk