



**HEALTH, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

The Health, Social and Environmental Affairs Committee conducted a meeting on Tuesday, August 27, 2024 at City Hall (Mayor's Conference Room), 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201. The Honorable Aditi Bussells, Chair called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of May 28, 2024 Health, Social, and Environmental Committee Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion made by Mr. Bailey and seconded by Mr. McDowell, the committee voted unanimously to approve the May 28, 2024 Health, Social, and Environmental Committee Meeting Minutes.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

2. Animal Services Update - Ms. Victoria Riles, Animal Services Superintendent

Ms. Victoria Riles, Animal Services Superintendent, summarized the fiscal year, noting decreased intake and euthanasia rates, despite stagnant national figures. The department has adopted programs from Charleston and Greenville, which have greater capacity and staffing. She proposed a one-time license fee for fully vetted animals, shifting from a \$100 annual fee to encourage spaying/neutering without mandates, particularly in under-resourced communities. An online pet licensing portal has also been soft-launched. Additionally, proposed ordinance changes aim to eliminate the spay/neuter exemption for service animals due to misuse of the ADA. They also include language to support the abandonment of animals. These proposals are being drafted by Legal. There is a free microchipping event on September 22, 2024. It is limited to City residents and is a part of the Best Friend's Home to Home Grant Challenge. Fulfilling this requirement, we could eligible to receive a grant for \$10,000.



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There was discussion about funds from Richland County; overhead cost of shelter; intergovernmental agreement with Fort Jackson; more proportionate funding based off data; financial constraints; nationwide euthanasia rates vs. local; connecting with Community Development, Public Works, and Columbia Council of Neighborhoods; and differential licensing and ordinance revisions.

Dr. Bussells requested staff provide differences between Lexington County, Richland County, and the City of Columbia.

3. Planted Wildlife Gardens Ordinance Update - Ms. Jessica Kinard, Esq., Senior Assistant City Attorney

Ms. Jessica Kinard, Senior Assistant City Attorney shared a referral from the Mayor, where constituents were interested in planting environmentally friendly gardens that don't fit into the aesthetic portions of the ordinance. The suggested ordinance modifications have already been approved by Legal. We are trying to figure out how to look toward enforcement of this to make it easier for Code Enforcement. She suggested creating a list of certified gardens by different organizations.

Ms. Trish German, South Carolina Native Plants Society (Midlands Chapter) said several members of the society have wildlife friendly gardens that were getting citations. She suggested the usage of cues to care – a pathway, signage, borders, and bird baths for example. Things that indicate that it is planned. There are several certifications that could help including a Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program.

There was discussion about local examples of native gardens; certification programs; and cost to citizens.

There was consensus of the committee to have staff make language adjustments in the ordinance and bring back to committee for final review.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk