



Columbia Health Social and Environmental Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Call to Order

The Columbia Health Social and Environmental Affairs Committee conducted a meeting on Tuesday, May 26, 2026 at City Hall (Mayor's Conference Room), 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201. The Honorable Sam P. Johnson, Chair called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. and The Honorable Tyler D. Bailey was present. The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr. was absent.

Approval of Minutes

1. April 28, 2026 Health, Social, and Environmental Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion made by Mr. Bailey and seconded by Mr. Johnson, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the April 28, 2026 Health, Social, and Environmental Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes.

Presentations

2. Climate Protection Action Committee Update — Mr. Cameron Cohran, Chair

Mr. Cameron Cohran, Chair reviewed the committee's mission and goals, including achieving 100% renewable energy for City operations by 2036 and increasing public engagement in climate action. He noted ongoing building audits, the launch of a transparency dashboard, and upcoming benchmarks such as the 2030 goal of 50 MW of clean energy, Hydro Plant renovations, and a planned solar farm near the wastewater plant. He highlighted public engagement efforts, including Columbia's 2025 Bee City designation, the monthly newsletter's increase in viewership, formation of a Smart Growth Subcommittee, the Earth Day 2026 Climate Action Fair, and quarterly environmental roundtables.

Mr. Bob Petrilus noted the structural differences within the committee due to the use of subgroups, explaining that participants in these subcommittees are not official appointees. He emphasized the opportunity to identify solutions that benefit both residents and the environment and expressed hope that the City will continue implementing Smart Growth principles. He highlighted the importance of increasing awareness around walkable communities, quality-of-life-focused development, and improved communication across City departments. He also announced that the next CPAC meeting would be held on June 5, 2026.

There was discussion about CPAC providing an update to City Council, changes to the bylaws, and new appointments.

3. Hazard Mitigation Grant Program – Stormwater Mitigation Project Opportunity – Ms. Dana Higgins, P.E., Director of Engineering

Ms. Dana Higgins, P.E., Director of Engineering provided an update on the Saluda Bypass and Maxcy Gregg stormwater project, which aims to reduce flooding in Five Points. The City applied for \$45 million through the Hurricane Helene Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) with a \$15 million match, and was awarded \$19 million. Staff is exploring options to address the remaining funding gap. The project includes two branches to redirect stormwater from Martin Luther King Jr. Park, Santee Avenue, and Blossom Street, with a total cost of approximately \$50.8 million. The improvements are expected to reduce the current 38-acre inundation area from a 10-year storm by about 55%. Downstream work in Maxcy Gregg Park will include stream realignment, channel widening, and a flood bench, with continued efforts to protect the site's grand trees.

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water explained that Charleston County Emergency Management brought the grant opportunity to the City during uncertainty about the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant. With the BRIC grant now moving forward, the additional \$19 million from Helene funds is an unexpected benefit. He noted that the project requires both the conveyance system and the Maxcy Gregg Park improvements, as neither component is effective alone. Staff will continue coordinating with the Parks and Recreation Department on enhancements to the park, and the City is working with its rate consultant to evaluate the stormwater fund and the adequacy of rates for the next bond issuance.

There was discussion about the downstream area at Martin Luther King Jr. Park, adding additional conveyance, the stormwater rate study, and alleviating flooding.

4. Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant Solar Project Update – Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager of Columbia Water

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager of Columbia Water reported that the Regional Solar Farm at the Metro Wastewater Plant is now feasible due to new grants and regional partnerships. He presented the preliminary site plan for the proposed solar installation on a vacant, low land area with high visibility from I-77. The design is for a canopy type array. A contract is planned for the June 9, 2026, City Council meeting agenda to ensure the City can spend 5% of project costs before July 1 and secure approximately \$3.5 million in Inflation Reduction Act tax rebates. Combined with a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, the incentives reduce the City's share of an \$8 to \$9 million project to about \$2.1 million.

There was discussion about energy output; receiving an update from Eau Claire Cooperative Health at the next meeting; and providing an update on the energy savings contract and the Canal Recovery Project.

There was consensus of the committee to meet in June. The committee will not meet in July.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, MMC, CPM
City Clerk