

Charleston County
Resilience and Sustainability Advisory Committee (RSAC)
Meeting Minutes
June 10, 2025

RSAC ATTENDEES

Stewart Weinberg, Scott Harris (College of Charleston), Diamond Curry (Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce), Scott Curtis (Citadel), Sally Brooks (Zoning and Planning), Nina Miller (BCDCOG).

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Fred Palm, Edisto Island
Torrey Sanders, Coastal Conservation League
Jack Magner, Coastal Conservation League

COUNTY STAFF

Molly Caggiano, Alexandra Petruch, David Rhode, Walter Smalls

ABSENT

Adrian Cain (Homebuilders Association)
Scott Runyon (Dominion Energy)

CALL TO ORDER

Stewart Weinberg called the Charleston County RSAC meeting to order at 9:39 a.m.
FOIA compliance and media acknowledgement announced.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS' REMARKS

- Approved meeting minutes at 9:40 a.m. from May 13, 2025.
 - Motion to approve introduced by Scott Harris and seconded by Sally Brooks. Motion was approved unanimously.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

Presentations:

Molly Caggiano

- Introduction provided for the Charleston County Multi-Hazard Vulnerability Assessment that was completed in October 2024.
- A discussion of the contents of the assessment along with strategies that can be derived and implemented from the findings scheduled to ensue following the presentation from Fernleaf.

Stephen Julka

Fernleaf: Charleston County Multi-Hazard Vulnerability Assessment

- How the assessment was conducted:
 - Discussions with multiple partners

- Direct work with the Chief Resilience Officer
 - Multiple workshops coordinated in the community
 - Provided training to Charleston County Staff in how to utilize Acceladapt.
 - Training was recorded if access desired.
 - Final report was developed
- Steps to Resilience
 - Iterative process to ensure priorities, stakeholder needs, and community centered initiatives were the focal points as opposed to idealism.
- What is Climate Resilience?
 - Resilience within the purview of vulnerability assessments is designed to avoid any type of hazard that causes enough loss in functional capacity that would prevent us from returning to pre-hazard functionality.
 - We want to pursue investments that build resilience.
 - The assessment focused on identifying opportunities for such investments that would allow a return to pre-hazard functionality if not better.
- The assessment looks beyond exposure to hazards, such as flooding, and identifies degrees of vulnerability to hazards based on factors such as building elevations.
- People & Community Assets
 - 6 categories of Assets: Residential; Cultural & Community; Critical & Gov. Owned; Industrial; Open Space; Commercial.
 - Each of these have criticality scores that are factored into their vulnerability.
 - Each category could have subcategories.
- Hazards
 - Current and Future Flooding; Extreme Heat; Wildfire; Earthquake; High Winds.
 - Fernleaf was able to incorporate nine different flood modeling approaches, including future projections, to develop a clearer picture of vulnerability, which would not have been available through the sole use of FEMA maps, which don't consider pluvial or tidal flooding or rising sea level concerns.
 - More in depth information regarding flood modeling is available in the online report.
- Acceladapt
 - Fernleaf's interactive web tool for incorporating all data in one place and producing a platform where the County can make decisions based on data.
 - Provides a parcel level of vulnerability that can be aggregated to higher levels.
 - Can draw custom boundaries for vulnerability data.
 - Layering system to include various infrastructure components in relation to vulnerable parcels.
 - Includes heat as secondary hazard to flooding; the aggregable data is included as well.
 - Can be used as a communication tool to share with residents.
 - Question: Acceladapt currently has indices of interwoven exposures and other variables. Is it possible to disentangle them to look just at exposures or just vulnerabilities?
 - Response: Yes, you can look at only exposures, adaptive capacity-you can turn on and off all the different components of vulnerability to determine areas of high

priority. More information is available in the recorded training that is available for review. (Stephen Julka)

- Question: Would you be able to determine the effectiveness of current projects, such as the as the one currently underway through Public Works? (DCA Smalls).
- Response: Conceptually, yes. In order to determine the effectiveness, before and after data would have to be accessible along with the specifications of the project. This would allow a measure of exposure and proper modeling. (Stephen Julka)

- Quantified Vulnerability and Risk
 - An assessment of the entire County was completed with vulnerability data compiled separately for summary areas. The assessment is all parcel level that has be aggregated to 15 planning areas.
- Multi-Hazard Findings
 - There is a plethora of data available, but there is an ability to pinpoint specific vulnerabilities. For example, determining adaptive capacity for a building that may have heightened wind exposure.
 - Amongst other exposures, there are also earthquakes, wildfires, etc..
 - It's significant to residents that there are numerous homes in various parts of the County that have multiple vulnerabilities.
 - Strategies concerning access during any type of hazard event were examined.
 - Vulnerability in 100 years looks similar to vulnerability in 20 years, so action can take place now.
 - Question: What is in the wind code? (Stewart Weinberg)
 - Contains specific design standards to prevent damage from wind, such as anchoring, roofing, and window requirements. (Stephen Julka)
- Assessment: Critical Infrastructure & 20-yr Flooding (USGS)
 - 14% of critical infrastructure properties are vulnerable county-wide.
- Key Takeaway:
 - Flood Vulnerability Outside of Regulatory Floodplain
 - 20% of all properties in the County are not elevated.
 - Comment: This is a good opportunity to engage in further discussion with Council as to how to fund flood mitigation, whether it be through sales taxes or some other means. (DCA Smalls)
 - Response: This topic will be revisited. (Stephen Julka)
 - Future Flooding will increase in severity
- Final Report and Resources
 - 11 data driven strategies with actions
 - The strategies were developed with a whole-of -government approach
 - Question: Will we be shown an example of how a specific action has been developed for a strategy?
 - Response: A few examples will be delved into deeper in the presentation. (Stephen Julka)
 - Comment: We're trending in the right direction as we start to think of strategies that may build upon the County's overarching strategic plan. (DCA Smalls).
 - Note: Drain system maintenance is an opportunity for the County to earn

significant points in the community rating system if a systematic approach to maintenance is adopted. (Stephen Julka)

- Through this assessment, there is an opportunity to develop a pipeline, prioritize projects, and establish sustainable, local sources of funding for these projects as opposed to grant reliance.
- Comment/Question: Has Fernleaf been able to determine the savings that the County could reap if they were to spend a certain dollar amount on resilience initiatives in the present? (Stewart Weinberg)
 - That information would provide excellent support and evidence for the strategies, but those calculations were beyond the scope of the assessment. (Stephen Julka)
 - This could become available potentially, and it may be the only way to secure buy in from County representation. (Stewart Weinberg)
- Flooding Mitigation Strategy
 - There was an analysis of who has the ability to recover based on low and high flooding vulnerability, social vulnerability, and lowest flood insurance coverage.
 - Question: Does low policy coverage also include no coverage?
 - Response: Yes. (Stephen Julka)
- Brownfields Strategy
 - Similar analysis that identifies land use types, focuses on those that are likely to be brownfields, and selects the properties that are vacant. Further analysis is conducted to identify brownfields with high heat vulnerability and a low median income variable.
 - A lot of layering and spatial data informs this data, but it helps us understand where to start on some of these more overwhelming resilience issues.
 - Question: Who is leading the strategy implementation? Is it the City? (DCA Smalls)
 - Fernleaf is leading the implementation of strategies derived from the assessment, but they receive a lot of support from the County and from the Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities. (Stephen Julka)
 - Response: The work that Fernleaf has done in flood mapping and the brownfields project has been to the benefit of the County at no cost. (Molly Caggiano)
- Next Steps entail continued work in communication and engagement at multiple levels, securing data supported funding, aligning initiatives with other overarching plans, and establishing and tracking metrics.
 - Comment: It would be advantageous to expand the alignment of the strategies and metric tracking beyond just the County's plans to incorporate all of the municipalities within Charleston County, thereby providing further encouragement, potentially through planned conferences, for the County to spearhead resilience initiatives. (Stewart Weinberg)
 - Comment: There is strong cohesion with the strategies and next steps within the County's Strategic Plan. (DCA Smalls).

Molly CaggianoResilience Updates:

- A lot of work for emergency preparedness, mitigation, and planning was tied to FEMA, which has experienced substantial budget cuts; as a result, much of the funding is no longer available.
- A presentation from Emergency Management to County Council on May 8, 2025, resulted in the approval of 9 recommendations, three of which impact resilience and sustainability: Prioritizing Hazard Mitigation; Moving Fast on Resilience Projects Currently in Pipeline; Deepen Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Faith-Based Relationships.
- Based on what's been approved by Council through this presentation and the 11 Strategies that have been developed, RSAC is essential in determining the prioritization of the order of implementation
- VOAD Workshop
 - In the County's response to emergency situations, recovery can only be as strong as our level of preparedness.
 - Currently, there is an effort by the Resilience division to re-establish the regional VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), which has remained active nationally and state-wide, but has gone dormant in the tri-county for the past few years.
 - A workshop is scheduled next week to invite partners from Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester.
 - Question: Could information or an invitation be shared with RSAC members so that those who are available can attend and provide support? (Stewart Weinberg)
 - Response: Yes. (Molly Caggiano)
- RSAC Recommendations for Consideration
 - Develop an Interdepartmental Working Group
 - Question: Are there currently meetings where all the department heads are in attendance? (Stewart Weinberg)
 - Response: Department heads will meet once a month, and those that express an interest in assisting are met with one on one. Presenting on one of these occasions would be a good starting point. Aly has met with quite a few department heads and leaders of other department for the Climate Action Plan, and ideally, we would be able to utilize their input and expertise for resilience initiatives as well. (DCA Smalls and Molly Caggiano)
 - Comment: It may be effective to emphasize the 15% of critical properties that would be vulnerable to exposures; this would resonate with people on an emotional level because the inability of these properties to respond during an emergency would impact recovery.
 - Identify and Begin Working on Specific Resilience Strategies
 - S08 Local Resilience Fund is of high priority
 - S05 Extreme Heat Planning is already in progress
 - S09 Structured Resilience Governance also of importance
 - Establish Metrics and Key Performance Indicators to Measure Progress on Resilience Initiatives
 - These metrics would help RSAC make the case to Council that progress is

being made and money is being saved.

- Suggestion: Fernleaf may have some of these metrics already that can be presented as evidence of the initiatives' effectiveness. (Stewart Weinberg)
- Response: We have the strategies from the Climate Action Plan, 11 Resilience Strategies, and the work of individual departments, such as Emergency Management, that are providing a lot of results, but a centralized means of recording and tracking progress, lag, metrics, etc. is still needed. A system similar to Floodstat, which was used by the City, could be employed to not only establish metrics but assigned them to a department or person to monitor activity and progress. (Stephen Julka)

GENERAL COMMENT

Open Discussion for Resilience Initiatives and Strategies

- The Resilience Strategies could be broken down into projects that allow us to see what kind of work is being done and by whom; from there, members can determine where they can participate and facilitate. (Scott Curtis)
- We'll also find that a lot of the strategies are incorporated in the work already being done by other departments and organizations. (DCA Smalls)
- Zoning and Planning is frequently working on ordinances to address resilience, and the department works closely with Stormwater for development projects and applications; Stormwater is implementing a special protection area. (Sally Brooks)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Call for Public Comment by Chair at 10:48am

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE/ACTION ITEMS

- Motion approved to have RSAC members explore options for S08: Local Resilience Fund
- Consensus met to have RSAC members identify and pursue interdepartmental working groups focused on resilience and sustainability.

NEXT MEETING

September 09, 2025

CHAIR REMARKS

A request was issued to all RSAC members to identify, by means of their choosing, key performance indicators (KPIs)/metrics that could be used to track performance and progress for the resilience strategies and initiatives.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair, Stewart Weinberg, adjourned the meeting at 10:50am with unanimous approval.

Sheetal Verma⁺

Ratified by the Charleston County
Resilience and Sustainability Advisory Committee this
09th day of September 2025.


Chair

Attest:


Administrative Officer - Resilience


Administrative Officer - Sustainability