

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

Date: December 10, 2018 **Time:** 9:00am

Members Present: Marc Grant, *Chairman*; Bill Harkins; Tom Lennox

Council Members Present: David Ames, John McCann (arrived 9:45am)

Members Absent: Tamara Becker, *Alternate*

Town Staff Present: Josh Gruber, *Assistant Town Manager*
Charles Cousins, *Director of Community Development*
Lindsey Rambow, *Records Administrator*

Media Present: None

1. Call to Order

Chairman Grant called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

2. Freedom of Information Act Compliance

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 27, 2018, meeting were approved.

4. New Business

Mr. Grant opened up discussion of the appointment process and formation of the Charter related to the U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee (“Corridor Committee”).

There was some discussion among the members of the Community Services Committee (CSC) on the timeline of forming the Corridor Committee. Mr. Grant stated that he wants to see the committee formed as soon as possible. He and Alex Brown have been meeting with residents to address issues related to this project. This issue is a top priority for the Town and especially for Ward 1 residents. Mr. Gruber stated that the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) doesn’t expect to have preliminary data available until spring at the earliest. SCDOT has begun proposing dates to meet with interested groups, including the Stoney community.

Mr. Harkins outlined some items he would like to see in the Corridor Committee Charter, including: a definition of the project; an outline of state, local, and federal participants and their roles and levels of authority; the purpose of the committee; the level of accountability of the committee and to whom they are accountable; the authority of the committee; the expertise and experience required of members; and the terms of committee members.

The CSC discussed the scope of the corridor, which runs from Moss Creek to the Wild Horse Road/Cross Island Parkway area. This includes problem areas that are scheduled or may need to be addressed prior to the commencement of the U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor project. It was decided that the Corridor Committee should have the authority to study and provide advice on interim or short-term solutions for areas such as the Wild Horse Road intersection. Mr. Cousins stated that

Beaufort County is moving forward with reconfiguration work at Windmill Harbour/Jenkins Island.

The CSC discussed term limits. Typically new committees are established with staggered terms of up to three years, but some committees are established to work until their purpose has been served and then to dissolve.

Mr. Alex Brown, resident of Ward 1, spoke on his desires for the Corridor Committee's goals; his preference for flexible term limits that would allow for the extension of members' tenure if necessary; and his concerns with a potential three-lane solution for the north end, given the number of fatal wrecks along the three-laned portion of U.S. 278 in Bluffton.

Mr. Cousins explained that the Town Council will have the authority to review and approve any plans that SCDOT generates for this project. Mr. Gruber noted that the Town owns land along the route of the corridor, giving the Town additional leverage in the process.

The CSC requested that staff prepare a draft Charter for the U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee and present it to the members of the CSC and Town Council by Friday, December 21, if possible.

Mr. Ames stated that the purpose of the Corridor Committee is to protect the character of the Island, and that therefore the members of the committee should have the technical expertise to ask the right questions at the start of the project. He recommended the committee include a balance of technical experts and those directly affected by the project. Mr. Ames gave an example of a question the committee should ask SCDOT: When they create plans, what assumptions do they make about systemic changes that will occur within the transportation system within the next thirty years (such as a move away from personal vehicles, adoption of mass transit, etc.)?

The CSC discussed financial considerations for the project. Mr. Gruber explained the three-way relationship between the Town, County, and State. SCDOT is open to suggestions from stakeholders in the process, but some of those suggestions may require that the Town locate funding. The Town has not submitted applications for any federal grants at this time, but that will be an option to explore for funding aesthetic improvements to the bridge and corridor design.

Mr. Gruber stated that the committee would have 7-11 members and that Town Council should look for individuals who have expertise in the following subject areas: improvement of traffic congestion; improvement of the island's survivability and preparation for natural disasters; reducing impacts to the surrounding community, in particular the historic Stoney community; improving access to Pinckney Island Wildlife Refuge and the Pinckney Island boat ramp; reducing impact to the environment; improving the aesthetic gateway to HHI; and pedestrian, bicyclist and multi-use pathway considerations.

Mr. Gruber explained that any improvements made to the corridor area over the next few years, including the Jenkins Island/Windmill Harbour project, are essentially short-term, as they will likely end up being replaced or altered by the Gateway Corridor project.

The CSC discussed whether they should be looking for someone with experience in mass transit to serve on the committee. Mr. Gruber stated that light rail is not a feasible option, and that SCDOT will not consider a light rail lane as part of this project due to its exorbitant cost. The CSC discussed the importance of focusing on solutions that will be viable for forty or fifty years or more; reducing the number of vehicles coming on island; the difficulties of implementing a mass transit system due to the lack of infrastructure and land for commuters to park; and the possibility of focusing on options to encourage carpooling among commuters, such as including a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane.

The CSC discussed the importance of maintaining good relationships and partnerships with SCDOT, the Beaufort County Legislative Delegation, and outside partners such as the Chamber of Commerce throughout this process.

5. Executive Session

At 9:45am, Marc Grant motioned to adjourn to Executive Session to review applications received for the U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee. Mr. Harkins seconded and the motion was approved.

6. Adjournment

At 10:45am, Mr. Grant moved to adjourn and Mr. Harkins seconded. The motion was approved.

Approved
Marc Grant, Chairman

Submitted by
Lindsey Rambow, Records Administrator