

Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force
Gullah-Geechee Culture Preservation Consultant Kick-Off Meeting

September 25, 2018 – 2:00 PM

Palmetto Electric – 111 Mathews Drive

Task Force Members present: Lavon Stevens, Joyce Wright, Martha Davis, Palmer Simmons, Caroline McVitty, Todd Theodore, Ibrahim Abdul-Malik

Town Council present: Kim Likins, Marc Grant

Town Staff present: Jayme Lopko, Jennifer Ray, Jenn McEwen

- Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.
- The agenda for today's meeting was approved by consent.
- Chairman Stevens gave opening remarks on the purpose of the meeting and then turned things over to the consultant team. Phil Walker of The Walker Collaborative introduced himself and went through a presentation detailing the Gullah-Geechee Culture Preservation Project. Victoria Smalls and Craig Richardson, who are also part of the consultant team, introduced themselves and went through part of the presentation.
- Following the presentation, the Task Force members were given an opportunity to comment on the Project. The Task Force commented on and discussed the following issues: losing Gullah land following a disaster – how to address this, how much time will be spent on each of the three topics – heirs property, culture preservation, and public policy, tapping into existing resources like the Gullah-Geechee Culture Heritage Corridor Management Plan, balancing preservation and development, legal challenges to the specific culture, culture is tied to the land not the people, there is not a one size fits all solution, past consultants and plans adopted by the Town, we need to look to the past and not repeat it, how will this effort be different from the past, implementation timing, economic opportunities for the Gullah community across the board, current plans just sit on a shelf – provide tools for Town to implement, suggest a matrix at the back of the report to work through implementation, the answer to the trust concern is a transparent process – trust can be earned through and engaged process and giving them ownership in project, and Hilton Head Island is unique – we may not know the answer but we know what it is not.
- Chairman Stevens opened the meeting for public comment and the following were received: US278 is the only way on and off the island, need to balance preserving land and culture with transportation needs, Town needs a communication plan with the community, other studies had recommendations but no implementation plan – crucial that this process and plan have implementation – differentiate this plan from other, communicate small successes, let community know they have been heard, projects lack execution – build measurements at the end of this plan – key to success is in execution, economic development for land – don't see if just see Town buying up the land, Town bought old Gullah Market – can we get it back? – can Town create a market, need interpretation of public art along with being able to get to it and touch it, and there is a disconnect between the Fraser vision and the Gullah culture – need to bridge the disconnect.
- Chairman Stevens adjourned the meeting at 3:23 PM.

Submitted by: Jayme Lopko

Meeting date: September 25, 2018

Approved: November 5, 2018