



Town of Hilton Head Island  
**Gullah Geechee Land &  
Cultural Preservation Task Force**

October 14, 2019 at 1:00 pm  
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**Present From the Committee:** Lavon Stevens, Ibrahim Abdul-Malik, Caroline McVitty, Martha Davis

**Present from Town Staff:** Sheryse DuBose, Jennifer Ray, Shawn Colin, Taylor Ladd, Josh Gruber

**Town Council Members Present:** John McCann, Tamara Becker, Thomas Lennox,

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### **1. Call to Order**

Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:06 PM.

### **2. FOIA 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 agenda for today's meeting and the minutes from the September 16, 2019 meeting were unable to be approved by consent as there was no quorum present.

### **4. Unfinished Business - none**

### **5. New Business**

Two of four groups present drafts of the proposed work plan for the Gullah Geechee Report recommendations that were identified as being top priority. Ibrahim Abdul-Malik presented the proposed work plan for four recommendations under the heading, Economic Opportunities and Other. Discussed were the departments and organizations involved in implementing the projects that fell under that category, as well as proposed funding, sources of funding, and a timeline. The Task Force and the public had the opportunity to comment and ask questions after each recommendation was presented. Expressed were concerns about the proposed 2020 implementation start date for seasonal signs not being soon enough and the desire for the Town to relax the ordinance in order to enable the selling of goods on private property, both comments referring to recommendation PP-14. Ibrahim Abdul-Malik commented on using Gullah colors for signage. Alex Brown reiterated the need for specific education and training, referring to recommendation CP-7. Caroline McVitty presented the proposed work plan for Heirs' Property/Land Preservation, following the same format as the first group, which is to allow for Task Force and the public to comment and ask questions after presenting each of the recommendations. There was a question for HP-3 concerning the funding for a Center for Heirs' Property Preservation Satellite Office, and the fact that the organization is limited towards the people they are able to serve. Tom Barnwell stated that the Center Heirs' Property Preservation has a program where five acres or more can be given for timberland, but there is a problem on

Hilton Head Island where burning to clear the land is not allowed. Consequently, people cannot participate in the program because alternatives for land clearing is too expensive. Also referencing HP-3, Alex Brown expressed the need for an Heirs' Property template to follow when addressing clearing property titles. There was a question for CP-1 as to whom would own the genealogy research. Chairman Stevens stated that establishing the overlay district will allow the implementation for other projects. Chairman Stevens concluded the discussion by thanking the Task Force for their efforts on the work plan.

**6. Appearance by Citizens on Items Unrelated to Today's Agenda – none**

**7. Staff Report**

Sheryse DuBose discussed the sale of Beaufort County properties due to delinquent taxes that took place on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Some Heirs' Property buyers, mostly with property in the county, who stated that they were bidding to recover their property and clear the title, were able to recover their property. Other Heirs' Property owners, who were not as fortunate, were outbid by other buyers and will need to either recover their property from redemption or lose it to the highest bidder. Josh Gruber explained that active bidding by investment groups, hedge funds, and banks for Heirs' Property is the 12% return in one year if the redemption property is not recovered, is the best investment opportunity. Chairman Stevens stated the need for education concerning the payment of property taxes and how to avoid properties going into redemption.

**8. Adjournment**

Chairman Stevens adjourned the meeting at 2:47 PM.

**Submitted by:** Sheryse DuBose

**Meeting Date:** October 14, 2019

**Approved:** November 4, 2019