



The Town of Hilton Head Island  
**Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural  
Preservation Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
July 6, 2021, 9:00 a.m.**

**Present from the Task Force:** Chairman Lavon Stevens, Ibrahim Abdul-Malik, Tom Henz

**Absent from the Task Force:** Shani Green, Palmer Simmons, Martha Davis, Theresa White, John Campbell, Mark O'Neil

**Present from Town Council:** Alex Brown, Tamara Becker

**Others Present:** Rod Casavant, Chairman, Chapter of SC Lowcountry SCORE; Michelle Gaston, Chair of Minority Small Business Support Committee of SC Lowcountry SCORE; Mike Waters, SC Lowcountry SCORE

**Present from Town Staff:** Sheryse DuBose, Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator; Shawn Colin, Senior Advisor to the Town Manager; Angie Stone, Assistant Town Manager; Jennifer Ray, Capital Projects Manager; Jenn McEwen, Director of Cultural Affairs; Carolyn Grant, Communications Director; Vicki Pfannenschmidt, Temporary Administrative Assistant

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**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m.

**2. FOIA Compliance** - Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the Town of Hilton Head Island.

**3. Welcome to Newly Appointed Members of the Task Force**

Chairman Stevens welcomed Mr. Henz.

**4. Roll Call** – See as noted above.

**5. Approval of Agenda**

As there was not a quorum, no vote was taken.

**6. Approval of Minutes**

a. May 3, 2021

As there was not a quorum, Chairman Stevens tabled the minutes to the next scheduled meeting.

## **7. Discussion Items**

### **a. SCORE SC Low Country Minority Small Business Support Presentation**

Rod Casavant thanked the Task Force for the opportunity to speak and explained that SCORE assists small businesses and non-profits in Beaufort, Colleton, Jasper and Hampton Counties. He noted they have outreach programs for minorities, women and veterans which assist in all business stages from start up to exit. Mr. Casavant conducted a detailed presentation and review of offered programs. He informed the Task Force that the Chapter's Business Mentors are dedicated, have deep experience and are backed by a national team of SCORE volunteers available to assist.

Michelle Gaston reviewed the upcoming Minority Small Business Support Program explaining there is a competitive grant program with a range of \$500 - \$2,500 in grant awards noting the average award will be \$1,000. She further explained that SCORE SC Lowcountry will absorb all administrative fees and mentors will be provided to assist with the application process and drafting a business plan or summary of operation. Ms. Gaston said SCORE SC Lowcountry will provide workshops to assist with the process. She reviewed the requirements for application to the program. Ms. Gaston reported that \$35,000 in grant funding has been received by SCORE SC Lowcountry to support this program and they expect to request another \$50,000 on remaining grants through the end of 2021. She said they anticipate success of program to lead to larger grants and expansion of program to other SCORE chapters.

The representatives of SCORE Lowcountry answered questions from the Task Force Members and members of the public.

### **b. Highway 278 Corridor Update**

Mr. Colin reported that beginning July 7, 2021 the environmental assessment for the project will be released and the public review and comment period will commence. He stated the assessment will define the purpose and need of the project as defined by SCDOT and describe how alternatives were developed. SCDOT will announce their preferred alternative which meets their purpose and need in the least impactful way to the community on both physical and human environments. Mr. Colin reviewed the public meetings held to date and noted that after release of the assessment and SCDOT preferred alternative, public comment and input will begin July 7, 2021 through August 22, 2021. He added that the preferred alternative is not final and that public comment and input will be considered, as well as input from partnering agencies. He noted SCDOT will hold a Community Open House at the Rowing and Sailing Center at 133 Squire Pope Road on July 17, 2021 from 1pm until 4pm. as well as an in-person public hearing at Island Recreation Center, 20 Wilborn Road on Thursday, July 22 from 2pm until 7pm.

Mr. Colin explained Town Council has held many meetings and workshops regarding the project, created a Gateway Corridor Committee which has held multiple meetings, hired a land planning consultant, and staff has conducted meetings with property owners throughout the corridor with more are scheduled in the upcoming weeks. He stated all comments will be compiled and submitted formally to SCDOT.

Mr. Colin answered questions from the Task Force and members of the public. Mr. Thomas Curtis Barnwell, Jr. inquired if there were any traffic studies scheduled regarding usage of the Cross Island Parkway, as opposed to US278, and conveyed safety concerns regarding the

left-hand turn onto Squire Pope Road or Wildhorse Road when coming onto Hilton Head Island. He also asked if the State had released information regarding the number of deaths in the Stoney Area of US278.

**c. Gullah Arts and Culture Update**

Jenn McEwen updated the Task Force on the following projects: collaboration with Hilton Head Island Middle School regarding local history; installation of signage on the cultural trail; implementation of augmented reality experiences at the cultural sites; feature of artists at Culture HHI with articles in Local Life; mural installations along Gumtree Road; the partnership with Mitchelville for the lantern parade; creation of a documentary about the history of Gullah visual artists; a project with high school art students wrapping utility boxes in art murals and the locations of such; and continuing work on a Gullah branding project. She also updated the Task Force on the progress regarding the Gullah Geechee Top Priority Recommendations. She encouraged Task Force members and the public to go to the CultureHHI.org site to access information, videos and documentaries regarding the Gullah Culture.

Ms. McEwen answered questions from the Task Force and members of the public.

**8. Citizen Comments**

Thomas Curtis Barnwell, Jr. expressed his appreciation and thanked the members of the Task Force, Town Council and staff for their time and commitment to the community. He expressed concerns of safety in the Stoney Area with the US278 redesign efforts and requested that Town Council, Beaufort County and SCDOT consider designing it above ground level with connection at the Cross Island Bridge and other designated areas.

Tai Scott requested an update on the recommendations from the Task Force to Town Council. Dr. DuBose noted the update would take place during the staff report.

**9. Staff Report**

Dr. DuBose updated the Task Force on the Gullah Geechee Top Priority Recommendations. She said second reading of the Family Compound and Family Subdivision LMO Amendments will take place at the July 20, 2021 regularly scheduled Town Council meeting.

**10. Adjournment**

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

**Submitted by:** Vicki Pfannenschmidt, Secretary

**Approved:** August 2, 2021