



The Town of Hilton Head Island
**Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural
Preservation Task Force
Meeting Minutes
June 6, 2022, 1:00 p.m.**

Present from the Task Force: Chairman Lavon Stevens, Vice Chairman Palmer E. Simmons, Tom Henz, John Campbell, Ibrahim Abdul-Malik

Absent from the Task Force: Shani Green (excused)

Present from Town Council: Alex Brown

Present from Town Staff: Missy Luick, Principal Planner; Anne Cyran, Interim Comprehensive Planning Manager; Karen Knox, Senior Administrative Assistant

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.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. **Roll Call** – as noted above.

4. **Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Stevens asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Henz moved to approve. Mr. Campbell seconded. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0.

5. **Approval of Minutes**

- a. Meeting of March 7, 2022
- b. Meeting of May 2, 2022

Chairman Stevens asked for a motion to approve both the Minutes of March 7, 2022 and May 2, 2022. Mr. Simmons moved to approve both sets of Minutes. Mr. Campbell seconded. The Minutes of March 7, 2022 and May 2, 2022 were unanimously approved by a vote of 5-0.

6. **Appearance by Citizens**

Public comments concerning agenda items were to be submitted electronically via the Open Town Hall HHI portal. There were no comments of record.

7. **Discussion Items**

- a. **Draft Gullah History and Cultural Education Program for Town Employees and Officials – Recommendation requested.**

Missy Luick stated it is recommended the Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force review the proposed Draft Gullah History and Cultural Education Program for Town Employees and Officials and recommend the Program for implementation. The program is designed as an education program for Town employees and Officials with an understanding of Hilton Head Island's Gullah history and culture. Initially this program would be available to All Staff and then after that to new employees. We would also record the program so those who could not attend could still watch it.

Chairman Stevens stated he first would like to recognize and thank staff for the work they are doing and to recognize the past work that was done by Dr. Sheryse DuBose who has since resigned. I know this educational piece is something Dr. DuBose worked very hard on. I thank the staff for stepping up and filling in until we find a replacement.

The Task Force had the following comments: would like to see something on the recognition of the economic life of the Gullah people. Part of what is often overlooked is how the communities were able to survive. What were the economic platforms that allowed them not just to sustain themselves, but to thrive as a community for many years prior to later development; such a wonderful project and great idea for the program to be recorded and perhaps put it on the Town's website; with Dr. Campbell and Dr. Cohen being involved, I am hoping they will certainly be able to tell the stories that might be omitted.

Chairman Stevens asked for a motion to accept the Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah History and Cultural Education Program for Town Employees and Officials. Mr. Henz moved to approve. Mr. Campbell seconded. It was recommended that the Task Force be able to see the presentation before it is presented to Staff and Officials. Miss Luick said they could work that into how we roll it out and do a test run with the Task Force. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 5-0.

b. Property Development Challenges in the Historic Neighborhoods – Continued discussion

Missy Luick stated that this matrix was shared with you last month and I understand the discussion was not yet complete. There is a team of staff that meets every other week to go through projects in our Historic Neighborhoods and we discuss the challenges with each of those particular cases. The Task Force made the following comments and inquiries: sewer connection continues to be a challenge; the cost of landscaping is estimated to be between \$10,000-\$20,000 is a problem; clarification on how long has a landscape plan been a requirement; clarification on how many projects have come through the Design Studio; clarification as to how many residents still need to tap into sewer; clarification that since bike paths have come through our neighborhoods it has changed the density and an applicant was told that the bike path changed the density.

Following the discussion, Ms. Luick responded to the comments and concerns above as follows: there is a Sewer Connect Program that will offer additional assistance for people who do not meet the requirements of Project Safe. The program will allow \$200,000 in financial assistance for sewer connections. We can do the landscape plan through the Design Studio that meets the requirements for the landscape tables we have, but that does not alleviate the actual cost to plant. It eliminates at least the cost of the professional services to create a landscape plan that is approvable. When the Family Compound and Family Subdivision Application Programs were pulled into the LMO, there was minimum landscaping requirements that were part of those amendments. Since the Design Studio's inception there have been 35 projects come through – not all have advanced – some were

withdrawn. Ms. Luick stated that changes have been made to the Design Studio procedures to help address and offer additional staff assistance to help move projects forward. Internally we are talking about these challenges and barriers and are working on ways to solve those problems. We look at this list with the Historic Neighborhood Team that we have and through the Design Studio process we have been able to identify a lot more of these barriers and come up with possible solutions to alleviate some of the barriers or at least offer assistance to help landowners move the project forward. 5% of the properties in Hilton Head PSD area currently do not have public sewer connections. Every property has the ability to connect to sewer at this point. Ms. Luick advised she will look into the bike path/density issue.

Chairman Stevens acknowledged the presence of Joyce Wright who is a former member of the Task Force. We are hoping at some point in the near future she might be able to rejoin the Task Force.

c. Status of Gullah Geechee Report 16 Top Priority Recommendations

Missy Luick advised that in your agenda packet was the Status of Gullah Geechee Report 16 Top Priority Recommendations. In that report there was a table of contents. It grouped the Top 16 projects in order of completeness. The first projects were at 100% and then the four remaining projects that were not yet complete were toward the end of the document. On your desks today, was a more detailed Workplan of where we stand with these projects. Ms. Luick proceeded to review in great detail the status of the Gullah Geechee Report 16 Top Priority Project Recommendations with the Task Force as listed below, Comment/inquiries from Task Force listed below item.

1) PP-5: Family Compound/Family Subdivision

Questioned if there is still such a thing as a Minor Subdivision – the planning steps and requirements are still the same between a Minor Subdivision and a Family Subdivision. Will provide an analysis of the comparison of the Minor Subdivision vs. the Family Subdivision. We have more work to do on the Family Subdivision component through assessing the Ordinance on the books. We have indicated that there are some areas of clarification that are needed in some of what was drafted. We will gather additional feedback and report back.

2) PP-6: Allow Site Design Flexibility – no questions or comments

3) PP-2: Fast Track FC/FS Applications – no questions or comments

4) PP-3: Permitting and Design Studio

Questioned who the contact is at the Town regarding the Design Studio – everything should go through Missy Luick at this time.

5) PP-11: Fund for Delinquent Taxes

Questioned where the fund to help is coming from – is it coming directly from the Town or are we pointing them in the direction of another resource – NIBCAA was identified as the Agency who would work with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry to establish that fund. The Town would provide communications and collaborations. At this point NIBCAA does not feel that they are in a position to pursue this. The Town is providing communication and education about those topics. We will continue to be ready if NIBCAA does want to pursue the fund.

6) PP-12: Educational Meetings/Workshops

Commented initially it was mentioned having a place or a resource center where citizens in the community could come and get information on their own beyond putting on the Workshops and doing the programs. We can look at adding resource center type documents to our website.

7) CP-1: Promote Heritage Library

Questioned how many people are participating – Linda Piekut from Heritage Library stated they have established the Center and we have just finished our second client with two additional clients in the pipeline.

8) CP-17: Outreach with Gullah Churches – no questions or comments

9) HP-1: Heirs' Property Family Research Project - no questions or comments

10)HP-2: Coordinate with Heirs' Property Organizations – no questions or comments

11)HP-3: CHPP Satellite Office

Questioned whether this should be marked 100% complete – We will put this at 75% and will update the outcome with the Task Force

12)HP-4: Fund to Clear Property Titles

Questioned whether this should be marked 100% complete – We will have a conversation regarding can this program be initiated, if not, why not and report back.

13)CP-7: Educate Town Officials and Employees – discussed above – no additional questions or comments

14)CP-14: Establish Open-Air Gullah Market

Commented that perhaps something might be established in the new Town Park, the Mid-Island Tract; clarification as to whether in this Plan is there anything set up for Pop-up Shops. This is an important part of what happens in the culture. I am not aware that this is in the Plan, but certainly can look at Special Events and what the approvals are for it.

15)PP-14: Temporary and Seasonal Signs – no questions or comments

16)PP-4: Establish an Overlay District – see discussion below.

d. Update on Historic Neighborhoods Overlay District

Missy Luick stated there was an amendment that was drafted that included an Overlay and included creating an RM-6 Zoning District. It went through Committees and Commissions with Public Hearings. The Overlay component with the RM-6 portion of it did not proceed. We did proceed with the Family Compound and Family Sub-Division Amendments. The elements of the Overlay were not taken forward. The current focus is to examine issues that have been identified as challenges to development in the Historic Neighborhoods. Staff identified these challenges while working with property owners through the Historic Neighborhoods Permitting and Design Studio. We will continue to share these observations with the Task Force and will look at additional Code modifications. There are some big picture Planning efforts coming up – the Island Wide Conditions and Trends Assessment and the Growth Framework and Island Master Plan. Some of the themes that were

identified in the Overlay may be able to be addressed through some of our ongoing work with the barriers and challenges and will be able to implement some of those.

Chairman Stevens thanked Missy for stepping in during this period of transition as well as the rest of the staff for the work that you have done and taking the time to give us a clearer understanding about where we are. Going forward I would like to reassess how we score these items and how they are marked. I am asking members of the Task Force to do the same thing. Chairman Stevens stated we are depending on some other resources and outside organizations to help us move some of these things along. I believe we should think about how we proceed with that. If we continue with some of those organizations, we want to hear from them. We might want to consider another path. I would like to have a conversation with NIBCAA and perhaps have them come in and give us a report.

Chairman Stevens stated he appreciates the work staff is doing and understand we are in a period of transition until we find someone else to fill the Historic Neighborhoods Administrator position. In the early days we called that position a liaison and that is what we are still hoping to find. It would be very helpful if we continue to do better with the communication piece with getting information out to the community.

8. Staff Report

Missy Luick stated she plans on giving a Design Studio Report monthly and will have it updated next month to show the number of projects completed. Juneteenth is coming up and the Town is going to have two booths – The Office of Cultural Affairs will have a booth as well as the Community Development Department in coordination with the CIP Group. Ms. Luick stated she briefly talked about the Sewer Connect Program earlier that has a total of \$200,000 available for sewer connection. The Home Safety and Repair Program has \$400,000 available. Those are available for home repairs and for abatement for demolition of uninhabited or unsafe structures. The third item of eligibility are for removal of hazardous trees. There is a cap of \$15,000 per improvement or repair to a particular person. There are also income qualifications for it. All the program details will be rolled out through our Communications arm shortly. I will be the Administrator of both programs.

The Task Force advised that the Gullah Museum will be sponsoring an Event on July 2, 2020.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Submitted by: Karen Knox, Secretary

Approved: July 11, 2022