



Town of Hilton Head Island
GULLAH GEECHEE LAND AND CULTURAL
PRESERVATION TASK FORCE MEETING
Monday, January 6, 2025, 1:00 PM
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Present were: Chairman Stevens, Vice Chairman Simmons, Mr. Campbell, Ms. Wright and Mr. Abdul-Malik. Mr. Henz and Ms. Green were excused.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Abdul-Malik moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Mr. Campbell seconded. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

3. Approval of the Minutes

a. Regular Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2024

Mr. Simmons moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 4, 2024. Ms. Wright seconded. The meeting minutes of November 4, 2024 were unanimously approved.

4. Staff Report

a. General Staff Updates - LMO/Districts - Shea Farrar, Principal Planner

Shea Farrar, Principal Planner, shared exciting updates regarding the upcoming District meetings, which are set to begin next week. Invitations will be sent via email to key stakeholders, along with a survey link that will go live concurrently with the first meeting.

The meetings will engage both the Planning Commission and the Task Force, ensuring a collaborative approach. Once the email communication has been finalized and approved, it will be distributed accordingly. Coordination with the Task Force will also take place to facilitate their involvement in the meetings.

Additionally, the Priority Amendments are scheduled for an introduction at the Planning Commission meeting in January, followed by a Public Hearing in February. Significant progress continues on the comprehensive LMO overhaul, with ongoing efforts behind the scenes.

b. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods, stated that the mission of this program is to support property owners and residents in historic neighborhoods with a range of services. These include assistance with property development permits, family

compounds, family subdivisions, conceptual site design, addressing, property access, business licenses, and connections to additional resources such as heirs' property, property taxes, and business development.

Since the Task Force's last meeting on November 4, 2024, four new requests have been received. These requests involve guidance on heirs' property, zoning allowances, and property development.

The program, which was launched in October 2021, has received a total of 95 Design Studio requests as of December, 2024. Of these, 67 have been completed, 20 are active, and 8 have been either withdrawn or marked as inactive.

Vice Chairman Simmons questioned whether to comply with the design guidelines for family compound, the property must have been owned by the family since 1956. When asked whether a newly acquired property would qualify under the current standards, Ms. Gavin clarified that, as of now, properties not owned by the family prior to 1956 would not meet the qualifications for family compound. Ms. Gavin stated that this issue can be brought up during our discussions on the LMO Overhaul.

Ms. Wright asked whether funding is carried over from year to year in the Design Studio and confirmed there is no funding from the Town. Ms. Gavin stated there are no grants, but we do have a partnership with Low Country Gullah Foundation to assist with issues that do arise within the Historic Neighborhoods Permitting and Design Studio.

c. Home Safety and Repair Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner
Historic Neighborhoods

Ms. Gavin, stated that as of the Task Force's meeting on November 4, 2024, we have received additional Home Safety and Repair applications.

The program launched in July 2022, has received a total of 147 applications as of December 2024. Of these, 113 were submitted as complete applications, while approximately 19 remain incomplete, pending additional information. Efforts are underway to contact the families associated with the incomplete applications to inform them of the missing requirements. Ms. Gavin emphasized her availability as a direct resource to assist applicants with any questions or concerns.

Of the 113 completed applications, 72 projects have been successfully completed, and 34 are currently under contract and permitted. However, Ms. Gavin noted that the program currently lacks additional funding to support future projects. She highlighted her ongoing efforts to identify new funding sources to sustain the program.

In May 2024, the program received an allocation of approximately \$900,000. By July, the program was restructured to ensure that the American Rescue Plan Act Funds could be fully encumbered before the December 31st deadline. This restructuring was successful, and all funds were utilized as planned. Notably, 90-95% of the projects funded through

the program are located within Historic Neighborhoods.

A robust discussion followed regarding potential funding sources and strategies to secure additional financial support for the program. Ms. Gavin shared her plans to collaborate with the Town's Grant Administrator to explore new funding opportunities. Additionally, she has reached out to the Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust to access the availability of resources that could support the program's continued operation.

Vice Chair Simmons stated he would like to see the Town take some ownership in this program.

Ms. Gavin stated she would report back to the Task Force with a breakdown of all the funds from the inception of the program to date to see where funding came from - both Home Safety Repair and Sewer Connection.

A Community member expressed their gratitude to Ms. Gavin for her personal assistance and her contributions to the Community. Ms. Wright emphasized the importance of community members who have benefited from this program attending meetings to share their experiences. She noted that having their testimonials on record would highlight the program's significance and its positive impact on families.

d. Sewer Connection Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Ms. Gavin stated we have received 48 applications - 32 of these have been completed and we currently have four jobs under contract as of now. We were awarded approximately \$70,000 earlier this year. That funding has all been expended at this time. We will be looking for funding for the Lateral Sewer Connection Program.

e. Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force 16 Priority Recommendations Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Ms. Gavin stated the Gullah Geechee Cultural Preservation Project is dedicated to preserving and celebrating the unique heritage of the Gullah Geechee community on Hilton Head Island. This initiative employs strategic approaches to address cultural preservation, public policy, and heirs' property issues. The report presents 36 recommendations, of which 16 are prioritized for immediate action in alignment with the Town Council's 2023-2025 Strategic Action Plan. To date, more than 60% of the priority recommendations have been successfully implemented, with the remaining recommendations actively progressing or under pursuit.

f. Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force 2025 Priorities - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Ms. Gavin reviewed the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force

2025 Priorities as included in their Agenda Packet.

Public Policies

- Historic Overlay District - this effort will be addressed through Town district planning and LMO Overhaul Project efforts.
- Historic Neighborhoods - Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force will be a key reviewer of plans and negotiations within historic neighborhoods.
- Family Subdivision/Family Compound - Regulation refinement will be completed as part of the LMO Overhaul Project.
- Workforce Housing - Housing initiatives will be prioritized and managed through the Town's Chief Housing Officer.
- Internal Coordination - Coordinate with Gullah Geechee Community Development Corporation Executive Director to determine overlap with the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Task Force workplan.

Cultural Preservation

- Gullah History and Cultural Awareness Program - the curriculum was approved in late 2022. For 2025, staff will implement the remaining video segment of this recommendation by coordinating with the Town's Community Engagement Division.

Refining Recommendations: Continued Efforts

- Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio.
- Family Subdivision and Family Compound implementation.
- Heirs' property support for property owners and regional coordination.
- Delinquent Tax Support Program.

5. Discussion Items

a. Approval of Proposed 2025 Meeting Dates

Mr. Abdul-Malik moved to approve the 2025 Meeting Dates. Vice Chairman Simmons seconded. Ms. Wright expressed the opinion that monthly meetings were unnecessary. The 2025 Meeting Dates were subsequently approved by a vote of 4-1, with Ms. Wright voting in opposition.

6. Public Comment - Non Agenda items

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

APPROVED: June 2, 2025

The recording of this Meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov