



Town of Hilton Head Island
GULLAH GEECHEE HISTORIC
NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION MEETING
Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 10:00 AM
Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Board Members Present: Shirley "Peaches" Peterson; David Ames; Alex Brown; Terry Brubaker and Andre White

Board Members Absent: Pastor Louis Johnson

Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Ames moved to adopt the agenda. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Regular Meeting Minutes of September 18, 2024

Mr. Ames moved to approve. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Unfinished Business

2024-19 Wayfinding Solution Development Update - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, provided the board with an update on the wayfinding solutions development project. The contracted company, Solaos conducted their initial sight visit November 7-8. The purpose of this visit was to initiate data collection and gather information on proposed sites. During their visit, the contractors engaged with key stakeholders, including representatives from the Town of Hilton Head Island, the Office of Cultural Affairs, and a diverse group of Gullah elders. Solaos is scheduled to return in the first quarter of 2025 to provide an update and document additional assets essential to the project's success.

The board discussed planned sites for development, how wayfinding will be implemented at these sites, and the hiring of interns to assist in the further development of the app. The board also emphasized the addition of historic cemeteries and the importance of preserving that

information to ensure it is not lost. Collectively, the board felt that an expansion of this project was needed, particularly to enhance accessibility and historical documentation, and agreed that this could be implemented in phase two. Additionally, the board considered opportunities for community engagement and partnerships to support the project's growth.

Mr. Brown made a motion to give the Executive Director the authorization to more forward with executing phase two of this project to include religious institutions and cemeteries. Mr. Ames seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Chair Peterson asked for public comments. There was no public comment.

The overall discussion was positive, with members expressing enthusiasm for the project's progress and its potential impact. The board looks forward to receiving an update in the coming months.

New Business

Discussion of the Stoney Neighborhood Revitalization Grant Program - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, presented the board with the Stoney Neighborhood Revitalization Grant Program. In his discussion, he detailed that this program will provide support to property owners in the Stoney neighborhood, a community that has been continuously and significantly impacted by the construction and development of Highway 278/William Hilton Parkway since 1956. He further outlined the eligibility requirements, eligible uses of funds, the overall process, and the next steps for the board to consider.

There was discussion regarding proof of ownership for applicants, the verification process, and ensuring accessibility for long-standing property owners who may face challenges in providing traditional documentation. Mr. Boxley assured the board that the proper vetting procedures would be in place to ensure fair and accurate determinations. The board expressed their appreciation for the program's implementation and looked forward to reviewing data and impact assessments as they become available.

Chair Peterson asked for public comments. There was no public comment.

Discussion of the Small Business Loan Program - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, presented the board with the Small Business Loan Program. In his discussion, he detailed that the program is designed to address long-standing challenges in accessing capital within the Gullah Geechee business community. The program aims to provide financial assistance ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, depending on the applicant's demonstrated need and available funding. Mr. Boxley further outlined the eligibility requirements,

application process, and next steps, which include a legal review of the program and further development in collaboration with the finance department to ensure compliance and sustainability.

The board discussed potential loan interest rates and the ability to keep them low, outreach strategies to ensure that business owners are aware of the program and understand how to apply. Members also emphasized the importance of financial education resources to help applicants successfully manage and grow their businesses. This initiative aligns with the Town's commitment to fostering sustainable growth and economic opportunity within the Gullah Geechee business community, and the board expressed support for its development and implementation.

Chair Peterson asked for public comments.

Heather Rath: Mrs. Rath addressed the board regarding the challenges Native Islanders face in accessing funding for their businesses. She also highlighted the limited availability of storefront locations should such opportunities arise, emphasizing the need for increased support and resources to foster economic growth within the community.

Discussion of the Real-Estate Loan Program - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, presented the board with the Real Estate Loan Program. This program seeks to address long-standing capital access barriers faced by Gullah Geechee property owners. The program will provide loans ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000, based on the applicant's needs and the availability of funding. Mr. Boxley further detailed the program's eligibility requirements, objectives, and scope, as well as the application process and next steps, which include a legal review of the program and further development in collaboration with the finance department to ensure compliance and sustainability.

Mr. Boxley also discussed ongoing conversations with modular home builders to explore more affordable and sustainable housing options compared to traditional construction. He emphasized that these options could provide high-quality, cost-effective solutions for homeowners while preserving the cultural and historical significance of Gullah Geechee land ownership. The board identified native islanders seeking to retain land ownership as the primary target audience for the program. They also discussed potential challenges, including heirs' property complications, the need for clear land titles, and financial partnerships with local and national banks to expand funding opportunities. The board expressed support for the initiative and recognized the importance of ensuring accessibility and long-term viability for participating property owners.

Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

Chair Peterson asked for public comments. There was no public comment for non agenda items.

Presentation and Recognitions

Recognizing the Contributions of Board Member David Ames

Chair Peterson presented Mr. Ames with a gift from the board as a token of appreciation. She sincerely thanked him for his time, dedication, and meaningful contributions, not only to the board but also to the Gullah Geechee community. She acknowledged his efforts in supporting the board's mission, his commitment to preserving and advocating for the cultural and economic well-being of the community, and his role in fostering initiatives that have positively impacted Gullah Geechee residents. The board expressed their gratitude and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Adjournment

Mr. Ames moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:13 am. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Approved: February 19, 2025

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