



Town of Hilton Head Island  
GULLAH GEECHEE HISTORIC  
NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION MEETING  
Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 10:00 AM  
Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM.

Committee Members Present: Shirley “Peaches” Peterson; Louis Johnson; Andre’ White; Alex Brown; and Alex Brown

Board Members Absent: Terry Brubaker

Adoption of the Agenda

**Mr. Brown moved to adopt the agenda. Mr. Johnson seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Approval of the Minutes

Regular Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2024

**Mr. Brown moved to approve. Mr. White seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Unfinished Business

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

Mr. Boxley provided the Board with an update on the progress of the wayfinding solution development. Since the last meeting, the Solaos team has made advancements, including:

- Identifying the historic and cultural sites to be featured in the application.
- Selecting nine (9) youth interns who will contribute to content creation, web development, and augmented reality features.
- Developing a dedicated landing page for public viewing.

In the coming weeks, the team will finalize QR codes, signage, and a formal presentation to prepare for the launch.

The Board engaged in a discussion, offering questions and feedback. They expressed interest in scheduling a site tour with the Solaos team to provide input before the application's public release. Additionally, the discussion emphasized the importance of clear and effective communication to ensure visitors understand the purpose of the wayfinding solution and how it serves as an educational resource on the Island's local history. The overall discussion was positive, and the Board looked forward to the next update from Mr. Boxley when available.

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

Mr. Boxley provided the Board with an update on the small business loan program. As part of its strategic action plan to increase access to capital, the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (GGHNCDC) is proposing the small business loan program in support of real estate development within the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods. The program will provide loans ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, based on the applicant's needs and the availability of funding. Mr. Boxley outlined the plan in his discussion as the following:

#### Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicants must demonstrate financial need and the ability to repay the loan.
- Required supporting documentation includes:
  - Tax returns
  - Credit report
  - A letter or statement of decline from a traditional financial institution
- Lower credit scores will not be a sole disqualifying factor
- Applicants must operate a business in a historic neighborhood or be business owners of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee descent.
- Applicants must demonstrate that 1 job is supported per \$50,000 borrowed

The goal is to increase the number of new Gullah Geechee owned businesses, provide access to capital for existing Gullah Geechee owned businesses, increase the number of businesses operating in the historic Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, and assist businesses to establish credit history for future business growth & development.

The Board engaged in a discussion, offering questions and feedback. Topics included the underwriting process, program guidelines, and potential lending partners. The Board also recommended incorporating an educational component to ensure applicants understand the application process and financial expectations. Lastly, Mr. Boxley noted that the program is undergoing its final legal review. Once complete, he will present it to the Board for their final review and approval.

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

Mr. Boxley provided the Board with an update on the real-estate loan program. The Real Estate Loan Program seeks to address long-standing barriers to capital experienced by Gullah Geechee landowners with property holdings in the historic Gullah Geechee neighborhoods of Hilton Head Island. The program will provide loans ranging from \$50,000 to \$200,000, based on the applicant's demonstrated need and the availability of funding.

As part of the approved strategic action plan to increase access to capital, the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (GGHNCDC) is proposing this program in support of the Gullah Geechee community with the purpose of supporting real estate development in the historic Gullah neighborhoods. The real estate loan program will support the Gullah Geechee community that has experienced longstanding challenges and supports property owner goals. Mr. Boxley outlined the plan in his discussion as the following:

Eligibility Criteria:

Applicants must demonstrate financial need and the ability to repay the loan.

- Required supporting documentation includes:
  - Tax return
  - Credit report
  - A letter or statement of decline from a traditional financial institution
- Clear title to the property
- Lower credit scores will not be a sole disqualifying factor

Eligible Funding Uses:

- Site improvements
- New construction
- Renovations to existing structures

The goal of the program is to increase access to capital for underserved historic neighborhoods of Hilton Head Island, promote sustainable land value appreciation through the development of stable, permanent housing, and support the creation of revenue streams for residents who own land but lack the necessary capital for development.

The Board engaged in a discussion, offering questions and feedback. Board members expressed concerns about rental properties being acquired and flipped for profit, the importance of implementing third-party educational services to assist applicants in understanding property ownership and financial management, and the vetting process for applicants to ensure funds are allocated to those with a genuine need and commitment to long-term community investment. Lastly, Mr. Boxley noted that the program is undergoing its final legal review. Once complete, he will present it to the Board for their final review and approval.

## Consideration of Proposed Meeting Dates for 2025

### Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Meetings -Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

The Committee discussed the proposed 2025 meeting dates. There was discussion of the 2025 RBC Heritage and the board cancelling the meeting scheduled for that week as it is a well-attended Island wide event, and the board was in agreeance of doing so. The board thought that engagement of community was also an important focus and suggested that Mr. Boxley utilize the Town Communications Department to get the word out about the meetings.

**Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve the 2025 Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation meeting dates to include the removal of the April meeting date. Mr. White seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

#### Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

There was no public comment at this time.

#### Adjournment

**Mr. Brown made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 am. Mr. Perry seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

**Approved: March 19, 2025**

**The recording of this Meeting can be found on the Town's website at [www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov](http://www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov)**