



## **Town of Hilton Head Island**

# **Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force Meeting**

**Monday, May 4, 2026, 1:00 PM  
1 Town Center Court, Hilton Head Island, SC  
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers**

---

The meeting can be viewed on the [Town's YouTube Channel](#), the [Beaufort County Channel](#), and Spectrum Channel 1304.

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Approval of the Minutes**
  - a. Regular Meeting Minutes of Monday, March 2, 2026.
- 4. Staff Report**
  - a. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report – Sharonica Stewart, Project Manager – Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation
  - b. Land Management Ordinance Task Force Update – Lavon Stevens, Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force, Chair
- 5. Discussion Items**
- 6. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items**
- 7. Adjournment**

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.

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), the Town of Hilton Head Island will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities. Auditory accommodations are available. Any person requiring further accommodation should contact the Town of Hilton Head Island ADA Coordinator as

soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the scheduled event.

Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Civility Pledge:

“I pledge to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others and their viewpoints, and finding solutions for the betterment of my city or town.”



# Town of Hilton Head Island GULLAH GEECHEE LAND AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION TASK FORCE MEETING Monday, March 2, 2026, 1:00 PM Minutes

## 1. Call to Order

Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. In attendance were: Chairman Stevens, Vice Chair Simmons, Chuck Lobaugh and Margaret Hewitt. Mr. Abdul-Malik, Ms. Wright and Ms. Green were absent.

## 2. Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Lobaugh moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Ms. Hewitt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## 3. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting Minutes of October 20, 2025.

Vice-Chair Simmons moved to approve the Minutes of October 20, 2025. Ms. Hewitt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## 4. Staff Report

- a. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report - Sharonica Stewart, Project Manager - Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Ms. Stewart stated this program began in October 2021 to serve as a one-stop shop of support and resources for our residents, property owners as well as business owners within our Historic Neighborhoods. Since our last meeting, we have had eight new requests. These requests include things such as family subdivisions, structural demolitions, manufacture home placement processes, as well as building standards and permitting requirements for modular as well as stick-built structures. What we are seeing through our Historic Neighborhoods is that some people want to know more about what will be required for stick-built structures. What we do through the Design Studio Program is we bring in those additional departments. For this request in particular, we brought in our Building Department to speak to those community members to share with them the most up-to-date information.

So far this year, we have had a total of six Design Studio requests — two of which are completed today and four remain active. Overall, in total since the inception of this Program, we have had a total of 126 requests, with 102 of those completed.

Ms. Stewart answered several questions from the Task Force.

**b. Gullah Geechee Cultural Preservation Project Report Update - Sharonica Stewart, Project Manager - Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation**

Ms. Stewart provided an update on a few of the recommendations. There were 37 recommendations that were identified. Last year, in July, we were able to share with the Task Force and the Community that 26 of those recommendations had been activated to date. These recommendations are part of the Town's operations and procedures. Out of the 37 recommendations, 26 have been activated and 11 of those were transferred to the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation. There are two that I wanted to bring to your attention today as they are currently in progress, one of which is Cultural Preservation 12. This recommendation was intended to create a framework to identify and elevate authentic Gullah-owned businesses and services through an adoption certification. The other one is Cultural Preservation 14. This recommendation was originally intended to establish a pilot open-air market to sell food, arts and crafts tied to Gullah culture. Increasing cultural visibility and providing economic opportunities for Gullah Geechee residents who may not otherwise be positioned to operate full-scale businesses.

Ms. Stewart answered several questions from the Task Force.

Ms. Stewart concluded her presentation by saying that the Town of Hilton Head Island remains deeply committed to preserving the Gullah Geechee heritage through thoughtful action and sustained partnership. With a strong foundation already in place, the Town, the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation, and the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force will continue working collaboratively to protect Gullah land, address heirs' property issues, and promote the cultural heritage of the Gullah Geechee people for generations to come.

**c. Land Management Ordinance Task Force Update - Shea Farrar, Principal Planner - CP**

Shea Farrar, Principal Planner, stated the Task Force has met three times. The first meeting was held on January 6, 2026. An overview of the scope and direction from Town Council was given. On January 26, 2026, the Task Force reviewed an overview of zoning codes which was presented by our Code Consultant. This set the foundation for future reviews of potential amendments that we dove into on February 26, 2026. At this meeting we began reviewing a document that has become the guiding document that we will use as we work through the process with the Task Force. Staff was asked to prepare an analysis of the 2014 Land Management Ordinance (LMO) and identify all subsequent changes to the Land Management Ordinance that had occurred since that time to rectify issues that arose from changes in that Code. From that we identified the remaining issues and issues for future consideration. The desire with the LMO update that we are in now is to focus in on specific changes that are needed to address those specific issues resulting from changes at that time. We have a list of potential amendments to consider that was included in that document. The Task Force began working through the first section of

that, which is Natural Resources Protections. That included tree protection and planting as well as wetland protection. The Task Force asked a number of questions and wanted clarification regarding some of those. It is anticipated that at our next meeting on March 5, 2026, and subsequent meetings, we will have a period of time at the beginning of each meeting that will be dedicated to a review of the prior questions and answers that staff has assembled as well as providing those in the packet for the Task Force. At this meeting, it was also requested that the Task Force Guiding document, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Preservation Project Report, be distributed to the Task Force, as well as other legacy plans. Links to those documents are being sent out in the packet for the next meeting. Next step in discussions will be zoning and land use. Following the Task Force work, this full body of work will come before the Gullah Geechee Task Force, Planning Commission and Community Development and Public Services Committee, as well as Town Council, who is ultimately responsible for the adoption of the changes.

Ms. Farrar answered questions from the Task Force.

## **5. Discussion Items**

### **a. Approval of Proposed 2026 Meeting Dates**

Vice-Chair Simmons moved to approve the proposed 2026 meeting dates. Mr. Lobaugh seconded. The motion passed unanimously. A proposed Workshop between the GGTF and the Planning Commission was discussed to refine LMO amendments.

## **6. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items**

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:08 pm

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



# TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

## *Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force*

---

**TO:** Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force  
**FROM:** Sharonica Stewart, Project Manager Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation  
**VIA:** Thomas Boxley, Executive Director Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation  
**DATE:** May 4, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report

---

### **BACKGROUND**

The Town of Hilton Head Island publicly launched the Historic Neighborhoods Permitting and Design Studio in October 2021.

The program was established to serve as a “one-stop” support resource for residents, property owners, and business owners in the Town’s historic neighborhoods - specifically to help them navigate land use and development standards, prepare development applications, and reduce barriers related to property use and development (including matters such as buffers, setbacks, easements, and rights-of-way). The Town also framed the program as a practical tool to help preserve historic neighborhoods and culture, by making it more streamlined for long-standing families to maintain, improve, and responsibly develop land that has often been held across generations.

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Monthly Update:**

From the last reporting period (March 2026), six new requests were received through the Historic Neighborhood Permitting and Design Studio. These requests focused on the following topics:

- Density allowances for property development
- Manufactured housing placement process
- Heirs property resources and assistance
- Business licensing requirements and process

#### **Program Overview:**

Since the program's inception, the Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio has provided assistance to numerous property owners and applicants within the historic neighborhoods.

The table below presents a year-by-year summary of the program’s performance and overall impact from October 2021 to April 2026. It outlines the number of requests received, completed requests, and active requests for each calendar year.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Request</b>	<b>Completed Request</b>	<b>Active Request</b>
2021	19	19	0
2022	18	18	0
2023	36	34	2
2024	21	14	7
2025	26	15	11
2026	12	7	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>25</b>

Over the five-year reporting period, the program has received 132 service requests. Of these, 107 have been completed, while 25 requests remain active.

**Request Addressed:**

Staff have assisted residents with a wide range of issues:

- Drafted conceptual site designs.
- Discussed resolutions to access issues, including access relocation.
- Discussed application requirements for Family Subdivision, Family Compound, and Small Residential Plan Review applications.
- Discussed density allowances.
- Assisted with street name applications.
- Discussed property line boundary adjustments and the Plat Stamp application process.

**COLLABORATION**

Providing these services requires collaboration with Town staff from several departments, including Planning, Engineering, Capital Improvement Projects, and Fire Rescue.

Staff also collaborate with outside agencies and nonprofits, including Lowcountry Gullah Foundation.

*Note: To preserve residents’ anonymity, details of the services provided are described generally.*