



Town of Hilton Head Island GULLAH GEECHEE HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION MEETING Wednesday, June 17, 2026, 10:00 AM Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Board Members Present: Louis Johnson, Chair; Shirley Peterson, Vice-Chair; David Ames; Alex Brown; Sarah Eisner; Melinda Tunner; Andre White; and Dave Byrd (non-voting member)

Chair Johnson recognized the recent resignation of Mayor Alan Perry from the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (CDC) Board of Directors and thanked him for his service. Chair Johnson welcomed Council Member Melinda Tunner, who was appointed to the Board pursuant to the CDC bylaws as a Town Council representative for the historic neighborhoods. Mayor Perry provided remarks regarding his decision to step down and expressed his continued support for the CDC. Council Member Tunner expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve and noted her interest in participating in the CDC's upcoming strategic planning process.

Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Ames made a motion to adopt. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 6-0 (Mr. White was not present at the time of the vote).

Approval of the Minutes

Regular Meeting Minutes of March 18, 2026

Mr. Ames made a motion to approve. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 6-0 (Mr. White was not present at the time of the vote).

Presentations

Report of the Executive Director

Executive Director Thomas Boxley provided an update on activities undertaken by the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (CDC) since the last meeting. Mr. Boxley reported on the Land Management Ordinance Task Force, which met throughout May and addressed several topics affecting the historic neighborhoods, including low- to moderate-density districts, subdivision standards, open space, mobility, street and pathway standards, and short-term rentals. He explained that the process is currently in recess while staff and consultants revise portions of the ordinance based on feedback received.

The Task Force is anticipated to reconvene in the fall before recommendations are forwarded to the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force, Planning Commission, and ultimately Town Council.

Mr. Boxley also provided an update on the 2026 Money Talks Financial Education Series, which began June 16 with approximately 12 participants. The first session focused on non-traditional funding sources and included representatives from financial institutions and other lending organizations. Mr. Boxley noted that participants represented a variety of industries and that the next session, scheduled for June 30 at the Island Recreation Center, would focus on business accounting and taxes. Additional updates included the successful approval of the Hilton Head Island Fishing Cooperative Park naming initiative, participation in the South Carolina Affordable Housing Summit, continued development of the Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) network, and the Design Studio. Mr. Boxley reported that the Design Studio had opened approximately 16 cases during the first half of 2026 involving property development, permitting, demolition, abatement, business licensing, and other property-related questions. He also reminded the Board that a strategic planning workshop would be held July 15 at 6:00 p.m. to begin updating the CDC's strategic plan and encouraged Board and community participation.

Board members expressed appreciation for the work being conducted by staff; there was emphasis on the importance of continued community outreach, financial education, disaster preparedness, and access to resources for residents; opportunities to provide information regarding donations to the CDC through the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry and the importance of making donation information readily accessible to potential supporters; and commended staff for the Money Talks program and its outreach efforts, noting the diverse participation and the value of connecting residents and business owners with non-traditional financing opportunities.

New Business

Consideration of a Resolution Approving the Name Change of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation to the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Economic Development Corporation — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, introduced the proposed Resolution to change the name of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation to the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Economic Development Corporation. Mr. Boxley explained that the proposed change had been under discussion for several months and was intended to more accurately reflect the organization's expanding role in community and economic development. He introduced Richardson LaBruce, an attorney with Finger, Melnick, Brooks & LaBruce, who provided an overview of the legal considerations associated with the proposed name change.

Mr. LaBruce explained that adding "Economic" to the organization's name would more clearly communicate that the CDC is intended to address both community development and

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economic development activities. He advised that the name change itself would not alter the organization's legal authority or capabilities, which are primarily governed by its bylaws and applicable law. Following Board approval, the proposed name change would require approval by Town Council, as the Town is the member of the organization, followed by updates to the organization's corporate records, Secretary of State filings, federal records, and governing documents.

Board members discussed the distinction between community development and economic development corporations and expressed interest in ensuring that the organization's governing documents adequately support the programs and initiatives the CDC intends to pursue; potential future funding opportunities and the importance of ensuring that the CDC's name, bylaws, and legal authority are aligned with its long-term mission; and members also expressed concern about making additional amendments in the future and wanted greater clarity regarding applicable State legislation and the organization's authority before proceeding.

Mr. Brown made a motion to table consideration of a resolution approving the name change of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation to the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Economic Development Corporation until the next meeting to allow for further discussion in executive session and to receive legal advice regarding the matter. Ms. Turner seconded.

Chair Johnson opened the floor for public comment.

There were no comments at this time.

Motion carried 7-0.

Discussion regarding the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Mr. Boxley introduced the discussion regarding the update of the CDC's 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan and explained that the June meeting served as the kickoff for communicating the upcoming strategic planning process. He advised that the Board and community will participate in a strategic planning workshop on July 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Feedback received during the workshop will be incorporated into a draft plan for presentation and review at the August 19 meeting, with the goal of final Board approval in September before the plan is presented to Town Council.

Mr. Boxley encouraged the Board to begin by reviewing the five goals established in the current strategic plan: stabilization and preservation of Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, cultural sites, and history; development of strategic partnerships; community education regarding the CDC; increased access to capital and financial education; and support for Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

training and employment opportunities for Gullah Geechee youth. He emphasized that the existing goals provide a strong foundation and suggested that the upcoming process focus primarily on developing updated strategies to achieve those goals, while allowing for new goals if the Board determines they are necessary.

Board members discussed the need to make the updated plan more action-oriented, measurable, and clearly defined; the meaning of terms such as “preservation” and “stabilization,” noting that the plan should recognize not only the preservation of land but also the ability of landowners to use their property as a viable economic resource; the potential for considering “sustainability” as an alternative or complementary concept and the importance of clearly defining terminology and establishing measurable outcomes; increasing participation by Gullah Geechee residents in the local economy through business ownership, entrepreneurship, and generational wealth-building opportunities; the importance of involving the broader community and potential private-sector partners in the strategic planning process; identifying key individuals and organizations that could participate in the July workshop and the possibility of obtaining facilitation assistance for the planning process; and directing staff to incorporate community engagement, measurable strategies, economic participation, and long-term sustainability into the upcoming strategic planning process.

No formal action was taken.

Discussion regarding Funding Strategies and Sustainability for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Mr. Boxley presented an update on the CDC's funding strategies and long-term sustainability efforts as the organization prepares to enter Fiscal Year 2027. He explained that the CDC has continued to pursue diversified funding sources since 2024, including establishing an account with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, participating in the RBC Heritage Foundation's Birdies for Charity and Champions FORE Charity programs, conducting private-sector outreach, and maintaining relationships with State and federal elected officials. He also continues to explore opportunities through local, State, and federal grant programs.

Mr. Boxley noted that the current federal funding environment presents additional challenges due to reductions in funding and uncertainty surrounding federal programs. He emphasized the importance of continuing to diversify the CDC's funding sources and increasing private and local fundraising efforts. Mr. Boxley advised that the CDC provides quarterly reports to the South Carolina Department of Commerce regarding its activities and use of State funding and continues to maintain communication with members of the legislative delegation.

Board members discussed the importance of communicating the results of fundraising efforts and demonstrating how funding received by the CDC is being used to achieve measurable outcomes; the need to identify specific projects that could serve as catalysts for private fundraising and demonstrate the CDC's ability to generate community and economic impact; potential opportunities related to the Bryant Road project, the CDC's recently acquired

property, disaster relief efforts, and potential Stoney neighborhood initiatives; the importance of recognizing not only monetary contributions but also the time, expertise, relationships, and other resources that community members and partners may provide; the potential for establishing Board fundraising expectations as part of the strategic planning process; the importance of identifying a project that could demonstrate the CDC's value and establish credibility with outside funding sources; opportunities for continued community engagement through initiatives such as the Fishing Cooperative Park; and the importance of demonstrating tangible results to build public support and future funding opportunities.

No formal action was taken.

Chair Johnson opened the floor to public comment.

Mayor Perry addressed the board regarding the CDC's funding strategies and long-term sustainability efforts.

Discussion and Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing a Partnership with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Mr. Boxley presented a proposed Resolution authorizing the CDC to establish a relationship with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta (FHLB Atlanta). He explained that the opportunity resulted from relationships developed during the South Carolina Affordable Housing Summit and could provide access to programs supporting housing and community development initiatives. Potential programs include down-payment assistance, construction financing, and other financial products that could support future projects, including potential development of CDC-owned property. Mr. Boxley emphasized that approval of the Resolution would not commit the CDC to a specific project or funding program but would allow the organization to begin the application and eligibility process.

Richardson LaBruce, legal counsel, reviewed the proposed Resolution and Certificate of Incumbency and advised that the documents are standard forms used by FHLB Atlanta. He explained that establishing the relationship would position the CDC to pursue future housing and development opportunities without creating a binding obligation to participate in a particular program. Mr. LaBruce also shared his prior experience with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta through his work with the Beaufort Housing Authority and noted that establishing such relationships can facilitate development financing and improve access to funding opportunities.

Board members discussed the broad language contained in the proposed Resolution and considered the types of programs the CDC may ultimately pursue, as well as potential financial obligations, liabilities, safeguards, and Board oversight; members expressed a preference for identifying specific projects before pursuing funding, while others emphasized that establishing the relationship now would allow the CDC to become eligible and "get in the queue" for future opportunities; and the opportunity to develop a relationship with Optus Bank and other financial partners that could assist with future housing and economic development initiatives.

Mr. Boxley clarified that any specific project or funding application would be brought back to the Board for consideration and approval. Legal counsel advised that the broad language is standard and that the CDC would have additional opportunities for due diligence and Board review when pursuing specific projects.

Mr. Brown made a motion to approve a resolution authorizing a partnership with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta. Ms. Peterson seconded.

Chair Johnson opened the floor to public comments.

There were no comments at this time.

Motion carried 6-1 (Ms. Tunner opposed).

Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

Chair Johnson opened the floor to public comments on non agenda items.

There were no comments at this time.

Adjournment

At 11:32 a.m., Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting.

Approved: August 19, 2026

The full recording and a transcript of this meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov