



Town of Hilton Head Island GULLAH GEECHEE LAND AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION TASK FORCE MEETING Monday, May 4, 2026, 1:00 PM Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. In attendance were: Chair Stevens, Vice-Chair Simmons, Mr. Abdul-Malik, Ms. Wright and Ms. Hewitt. Mr. Lobaugh and Ms. Green were excused.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Abdul-Malik moved to approve the agenda as presented. Vice-Chair Simmons seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting Minutes of Monday, March 2, 2026.

Mr. Abdul-Malik moved to approve the minutes of March 2, 2026 as presented. Ms. Wright 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 informed the Task Force that, since the previous meeting, six new requests have been received. These requests primarily pertain to density allowances for property development, which is frequently a key inquiry received at Town Hall. An additional request involved the placement of manufactured housing.

A significant focus has been on heirs' property resources and assistance, including supporting family members with related matters. Additionally, staff have provided guidance on business licensing requirements and the associated processes. Since the last meeting, there has been a notable increase in requests for business licensing assistance through the Design Studio, which is a positive development.

Since the program's inception in October 2021 through April 2026, a total of 132 requests have been received. Of these, 107 have been completed, and 25 remain active. For the current year, 12 requests have been received to date, with five currently under active review.

b. Land Management Ordinance Task Force Update – Lavon Stevens, Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force, Chair

Chair Stevens provided an overview of the LMO Task Force's purpose and process, emphasizing the importance of community input in shaping land use, density considerations, and cultural preservation. The Chair noted that the Task Force, along with staff, will continue community outreach efforts and encourage public engagement through review of archived LMO meeting materials available online.

Discussion focused on balancing development density and land use options with the protection of native Island communities, as well as the role of historical studies in informing policy decisions. It was noted that legal organizations have submitted correspondence to staff and are actively monitoring the LMO process.

The Task Force and staff will prepare and present data for the next meeting regarding acreage and land ownership, including historically Gullah-held lands, properties outside Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), and Town-owned parcels.

Members of the public requested greater accountability and clarification regarding prior Town acquisitions of Gullah-owned land, as well as the circumstances surrounding historical property sales. Staff will research these inquiries and provide a report at a future meeting.

Public comment further emphasized that previously completed historical studies remain relevant and should continue to inform the LMO revision process to ensure protection of native neighborhoods. Several speakers also expressed concern that the LMO rewrite may be proceeding too quickly and urged a comprehensive and deliberate review to ensure equity and preservation of Gullah communities.

5. Discussion Items

6. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:03 pm.

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