



Town of Hilton Head Island GULLAH GEECHEE LAND AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION TASK FORCE MEETING Monday, December 4, 2023, 1:00 PM Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm. He welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the year for the Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force. He expressed excitement about the accomplishments over the past few years, the good momentum and the challenges faced. He acknowledged the presence of Council Member, Alex Brown, and welcomed Thomas Boxley, the Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Community Development Corporation, and expressed thanks for the work he is doing.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

There being no changes to the Agenda as presented, a Motion to approve the Agenda was made by Henz and seconded by Simmons. By a show of hands, the Agenda was approved by a vote of 7-0.

3. Approval of the Minutes

a. Regular Meeting Minutes of November 6, 2023

Wright noted that the Minutes did not reflect that she was in attendance, therefore, the Minutes will be corrected to reflect this. A Motion to approve the Minutes of November 6, 2023, as corrected, was made by Simmons and seconded by Campbell. By a show of hands, the Minutes of November 6, 2023, as corrected, was approved by a vote of 7-0.

4. Appearance by Citizens

No comments were received on the Open Town Hall Portal, and no citizen requested an appearance before the Committee.

5. Staff Report

a. General Staff Update

Chair Stevens reflected on the recommendations the Task Force has been working on for the past several years, and priorities that have been put into the forefront. He asked the Task Force to think about how to move more of the priorities along, how to engage the community, and encouraged the staff to assist in this effort. He expressed his desire that the new year start with a fresh look at any new and creative ideas developed with the recommendations of the Task Force. He reminded the Task Force that it is a subcommittee of the Planning Commission with no policy-making authority, but Task

Force recommendations are sent to the Planning Commission, who funnel them to Town Council, which is the avenue to get them to Council Members and policymakers. He expressed excitement for having the Community Development Corporation onboard to work in concert with the Task Force, but he noted there should be no confusion that efforts are being duplicated or that there is competition with the CDC. The Task Force fully supports the CDC and will be working hand-in-hand with them. He thanked the Town and hard-working staff for bringing Mr. Boxley aboard.

Alexis Cook, Principal Planner, noted that new hires, including a Manager, CDC Coordinator, and a new Principal Planner had been added to the planning group, and a phone interview with a potential new Senior Planner is scheduled. She indicated no update was available for the LMO 5, but any questions can be taken to the Department. She noted the code overall from beginning to end is anticipated to be a lengthy process, and all of the recommendations to the Family Compound and Subdivision will be included in that process. With a code writer expected to be under contract later this month, that project should be launched in early January.

b. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report

Cook presented a Summary of the residents served by the Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio during the period October 2021 through October 2023. She expressed a desire in the new year to create new community communication to bring attention to the Design Studio and the services available. Discussion followed about the process and follow-ups once the process has been completed. Cook described the design log, the steps to be taken by an applicant, and how their status is tracked each month to determine if a project is on hold, in process, completed or withdrawn. The use of completed applicants serving as mentors was discussed, as well as mobile home placement assistance and streamlining of the process. Cook agreed to present an update on these at the next meeting. She assured the members that efforts to make the Design Studio a "one-stop shop" are underway to help citizens develop their property.

c. Home Safety and Repair Program Update

Nicte Barrientos, Planner - Economic Development - presented an update on the Home Safety and Repair Program, which report is a part of the agenda package. Per request from last meeting, a location map was created to show the areas in which applications have been received. A better coding system to identify those complete, incomplete and those in process was suggested, as well as a start date for the statistics and the amounts awarded to date. Missy Luick, Director of Planning, indicated that for both Home Safety and Repair and Sewer Connection there will be additional funds necessary to continue the programs. Future budget discussions will take place concerning additional funding, as there is more need in the community that has not yet been met. Sources of funding would be discussed in those budget discussions.

d. Sewer Connection Program Update

Barrientos presented an update on the Sewer Connection Program. She noted that the

cap has almost been reached for funds available. A suggestion was made to more actively reach out to the community with a goal that 100% of our residences would be connected to a sewer system by a specific date and work towards making that happen. Chair Stevens mentioned that while 100% of those who want to be connected may be an achievable goal, there are some in the community who have chosen not to be connected.

6. Discussion Items

Chair Stevens suggested to the Committee that the January 8 meeting be canceled to give Staff some time to breathe and catch up on items requested.

a. Family Compound/ Family Subdivision Improvements

Cook presented a follow-up presentation from the November meeting on the Family Compound and Family Subdivision review and process. She detailed the applications to date, types (family compounds, regular subdivision), the intent and purpose, the general comparisons to other application types, what is working in the applications received, and those areas for improvement and who will be responsible for providing these items. She noted there are more items identified than last month. While these are some of the areas staff has identified with the Task Force, there will be further engagement with the code writer to identify and use existing cases to show problems or areas of improvement that are identified on reviewed plans or in the Design Studio. Code testing will be beneficial against potential or existing applications to make sure it meets the purpose and intent and goals identified in the Gullah Geechee Preservation Project Report. Discussion with members ensued about streamlining the processes further if needed to meet the goal and objectives of minimal application requirements, She assured the members that the code writing firm has done this before in other communities, so they can make sure these neighborhood-specific type of applications can be applied to meet their purpose and intent. While this is not the end of the Areas for Improvement, more can be added and suggestions are welcomed. The process of working with the code writer must be worked out from beginning to end, but there will be opportunities for engagement with this group and other stakeholders ahead of code drafting, with the schedule yet to be determined. A good update should be available in February.

Henz made comments that items to be focused upon included preserving businesses of local families within the historic neighborhoods and small home development plans with the next step finding contractors and suppliers to make these available. The staff was commended on listening to input from the community as the priorities are established.

Town Council Member Brown thanked the Task Force for its guidance and Luick and her team for pulling this all together. Since the Task Force's recommendations will be presented to the Planning Commission and then on to Town Council, he asked that the Task Force be very specific as to what it supports and does not support. Specifically as to Family Compound and Family Subdivision, he reminded the Task Force that the purpose and intent of the Family Compound is for a development tool, with Family Subdivision as more a paper subdivision for those looking to just clear title from heirs property, with a

distinct difference between the two. Discussion ensued with staff about the difference between tiny homes and small homes, and staff will bring that topic back for further discussion in the February meeting. Brian Eber, Development Services Manager, indicated a process is in place for tiny homes, but it is not a clear or quick process.

Phase 5 will include working to develop pre-made concept plans for pre-approved housing stock that would be acceptable in those districts. He noted that recently Beaufort County implemented an income-based fee discount program where the impact fees assessed and collected by the Town on behalf of Beaufort County could be reduced by up to 60%, with the forms and process available and being distributed now to the public. He noted that the Town of Hilton Head Island currently has no such reduction for its own impact fees, and the Task Force suggested the Town should offer such a discount within the LMO rewrite. Cook advised that a LMO Phase 5 update would be provided at the February meeting, including the items discussed today.

b. Fire Rescue Presentation

Capt. Willie Ferguson and Capt. Lee Jenkins from Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue presented a presentation regarding the Community Outreach goal as set forth in the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, which is to maximize community outreach through the enhancement of programs and partnerships. He detailed the partnerships with local schools, the Island Rec Center the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Neighborhood Outreach Connection, Bluffton Self Help, the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation, and the Office of Cultural Affairs. The current implemented programs were outlined in detail, as well as future ideas for programs being developed.

They noted that all the collaborative efforts will help future recruitment for local youth and members of the Gullah Geechee community, to educate more members in our community and to improve the quality of life for everyone. Questions from members were answered, and the Captains were thanked for their service to the community.

c. Land Preservation Update

No report.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was declared adjourned at 2:46 PM.

Submitted by: Lynn Buchman
Administrative Assistant

Approved: March 4, 2024

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