



**Town of Hilton Head Island
GULLAH GEECHEE HISTORIC
NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, March 18, 2024 – 2:00 PM
Minutes**

Call to Order

Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

Board Members Present: Chair Shirley “Peaches” Peterson; David Ames; Alex Brown; Pastor Louis Johnson, and Terry Brubaker (via Microsoft Teams)

Board Members Absent: Andre White

Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Ames moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Ames made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 6, 2023. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Ames made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 17, 2024. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

Appearance by Citizens

There were no comments made.

New Business

Discussion and Review of Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Proposed Budget – Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, the Executive Director, presented the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 operating budget to the Board, emphasizing the grant funding received from the State and Beaufort County, which has thus far remained unused and absorbed by the town. The proposed budget, effective from July 1, includes typical operating line items such as Mr. Boxley’s salary, professional services, and other necessary expenses. Additionally, it allocates a line item to support property owners along the Stoney Corridor in anticipation of the William Hilton Parkway Gateway Corridor Project. Grant and incentive programs related to real estate and small business lending, as outlined in the Fiscal Year 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, are also included.

The budget breakdown consists of Personnel & Benefits, operating expenses, professional services, grant & incentives loans, capital outlay & land acquisition, and project expenses & contingency. The total proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025 is \$3,405,355.

Chair Peterson invited comments from the Board.

Alex Brown, Board Member, (Chair of the Finance & Administrative Committee for the Town), shared insights from the committee's review of agencies requesting funding. He mentioned an applicant, Blaquity, focusing on small businesses within the African American community, whose request was denied. However, Mr. Brown suggested that if there are entities in need of such services, the Board could potentially offer assistance in the form of a scholarship. Mr. Boxley noted that this aligns with the grant and loan program line item, wherein the GGHNCDC supports small businesses like Blaquity through properly vetted business plans and loan applications. Moreover, Mr. Brown addressed land acquisition, advocating for the GGHNCDC to be proactive in purchasing land and potentially utilizing funding from the Town for this purpose. Mr. Boxley shared ongoing communication with Gwen Chambers, the Director of Blaquity, regarding potential future projects. These discussions reflect the Board's commitment to strategic planning and resource allocation to support both the organization's mission and the broader community's needs.

David Ames, Board Member, raised concerns about the adequacy of the \$500,000 allocated for incentive loans and grants. Mr. Boxley expressed his belief that this amount would serve as a good starting point for the fiscal year, acknowledging the potential influx of applicants once the programs are advertised. There was also discussion about seeking insights from other local entities that have provided small business loans to inform the GGHNCDC's approach. Chair Peterson suggested consulting with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry for additional reference and experience.

Other Board Members expressed positive sentiments regarding the initial proposed budget, recognizing its potential to make a significant impact on the Native Island Community. The majority of the budget allocation towards grant & incentives loans, and capital outlay & land acquisition was particularly noted for its potential reach and effectiveness. In response to requests from the Board, Mr. Boxley agreed to provide bi-monthly budgetary updates to ensure transparency and accountability in financial management. These discussions underscore the Board's commitment to prudent financial planning and maximizing the impact of the GGHNCDC's resources on the community. It reflects a collaborative effort to address concerns and explore opportunities for improvement in the organization's financial strategies.

Mr. Ames made a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Proposed Budget totaling \$3,405,355. Mr. Brubaker seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

Chair Peterson asked for public comment.

Yolwanda Cohen McKinney: Ms. Cohen Mckinney asked if there was any public input from the Native Island Community regarding the needs of the community at large in regards to the proposed buget.

Louise Cohen: Ms. Cohen asked how she can familiarize herself with the functions of the GGHNCDC and its overall services.

Belinda Stewart Young: Will the GGHNCDC offer grants as an option as opposed to loans and if so what would that consist of?

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:41 pm.

Approved: May 15, 2024