



**Town of Hilton Head Island
GULLAH GEECHEE LAND AND CULTURAL
PRESERVATION TASK FORCE MEETING
Monday, August 5, 2024, 1:00 PM
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

Chair Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Chair Stevens said they would like to amend the Agenda to add an update from Thomas Boxley, Executive Director Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods CDC. Mr. Simmons moved to adopt the Agenda as amended. Ms. Wright seconded. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

3. Approval of the Minutes

a. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 6, 2024

Ms. Wright moved to approve the meeting Minutes of May 6, 2024. Mr. Campbell seconded. The Minutes of May 6, 2024 were unanimously approved.

b. Regular Meeting Minutes of July 1, 2024

Ms. Wright moved to approve the minutes of July 1, 2024. Mr. Campbell seconded. The Minutes of July 1, 2024 were unanimously approved.

4. Staff Report

a. General Staff Updates - LMO/Districts - Alexis McIlwee, Principal Planner and Shea Farrar, Principal Planner

Shea Farrar, Principal Planner, stated that Alexis McIlwee, Principal Planner would be joining her today to share updates on the LMO and Districts Project. A lot of work has been taking place behind the scenes, and we are getting ready to bring that work forward publicly. We will be giving you updates at each of your meetings as the project continues to evolve.

Alexis McIlwee mentioned there are two LMO initiatives happening side by side - the LMO Priority amendments, which is a set of 12 different amendments that you are going to see coming forward. These are priority changes to address things that have been lingering in the LMO in front of the overhaul. We then have the overhaul, which is looking at the entire LMO in every single chapter and looking at all of our ordinances. This project kicked off at the beginning of June, and we are now working with the consulting

team on the details of an engagement plan.

Shea Farrar said the Districts Project has been streamlined to align with the LMO Overhaul in particular. It will feed recommendations for the seven additional districts. If you recall back in 2022, Mid-Island District Plan was adopted by Town Council. The remaining Districts are the areas that are outside of our planned developments and are what the District Plans will focus on. The project will involve the preparation of seven district area plans that will make recommendations for land use, zoning, connectivity and other policy initiatives that could take place to improve the Districts. The implementation of those will be heavily tied to the LMO Project, the Capital Improvements Program and some other policy initiatives. For both of our projects, a Town Council Workshop has been scheduled for September 16, 2024, that will be followed by public engagement on the Districts Project as well, engagement with the Gullah Geechee Task Force, Planning Commission and the Housing Action Committee. We will have stakeholder interviews as well as public surveys as a follow-up to help define the draft plans and the final recommendations that are included in those.

Both Shea Farrar and Alexis McIlwee answered questions from the Task Force including recommendations that the Task Force had recommended for LMO changes. Ms. McIlwee stated that one of the priority amendments does address family compounds and family subdivisions which will be in front of the LMO Overhaul and then the entire Family Compound and Family Subdivision process will be reconsidered and re-reviewed during the Overhaul phase. Currently we are in our zoning district review, it is a high level review of what is working in our zoning districts, what needs to change and what could be improved.

b. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods, stated we have had local television coverage to promote this program as well as print material to ensure when we are in the community we can share the message on what this program provides as well as in the Town Hall lobby. The reporting term for the Historic Neighborhood Permitting and Design Studio is from October 2021 into July 2024. There has been a total of 86 requests with 65 of those completed, 16 remain active, eight are on hold and five have been withdrawn or are not active at this time.

c. Home Safety and Repair Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods advised that the last time staff gave you an update, the program was going through a complete restructure. With this restructure, we have identified key individuals to ensure that the program's processes move forward without any delays. One of the biggest things were admin, reporting and keeping everything all together as well as communication. When I first joined the Town, individuals were calling daily as to where they stand in the process. Every individual who has been approved by this program and is currently awaiting Town visits they have been

informed of a schedule date for us to come out and see them. Outside of having key individuals in admin and communications, we also have a clear inspections team and a contract review team to ensure that everything constantly works on a decent cycle and nothing is becoming delayed. The reporting term is July 2022 - July 2024. To date we have received 140 applications. 105 completed applications have been received, 38 permitted jobs have been completed, 4 that are currently permitted jobs that are under contract and 63 that are currently awaiting Town visits. We have already initiated some of those Town site visits.

d. Sewer Connection Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods, stated we do now have an Admin who is overseeing the Sewer Connection Program. She is serving as the lead, however, I am still the liaison for citizens to ensure that whenever they are looking to apply or have questions they can always reference me at any given time.

5. Discussion Items

Mr. Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods CDC, gave a brief update regarding the Town's efforts thus far regarding Tropical Storm Debby. The Emergency Operations Command was activated this morning @ 6:00 a.m. as a result of the impending storm. We would like to encourage the public to make sure you are prepared and are storm ready and have a plan in place should you need to evacuate or before the flooding gets too extreme over the next few days, make sure you have enough water and food for five days. Also, please make sure you check with trusted sources for information on the storm.

Mr. Boxley stated that through the CDC last month we began a series of seminars for small business and real estate lending in partnership with TD Bank. This is the first in a five part series that will take place monthly. Our next session is on August 13th. All of our sessions will be hosted at the Island Recreation Center. We wanted to begin to connect the Gullah business community here with the lending institution.

a. Hurricane Preparation for Gullah Communities Presentation - Meldon Hollis, previous Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Associate

Mr. Meldon Hollis Jr., Political Science and Emergency Management Professor (retired), presented FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) policy changes specific to the Gullah communities. Mr. Hollis discussed three threats to the Gullah communities including: the aging demographic, economic development decreasing Gullah land, and climate change.

Mr. Hollis discussed the policy changes to the FEMA policy that prevented numerous Gullah families (up to one-third of families) from receiving aid based on the lack of a deed or other formal proof of homeownership. As many of these families live on heirs' property, they were not able to receive aid in the previous policy. The new policy states that families living on heirs' property will now be allowed to self-certify that they own their homes. FEMA will also accept letters from local officials, taxes, and bills for home repairs

as proof of ownership. This policy change happened in September 2021 and is in effect as of March 22, 2024.

Mr. Hollis stated the new FEMA Reforms Disaster Assistance Program is to help survivors recover faster:

The first is to establish new benefits that provide flexible funding directly to survivors when they need it most. This includes establishing serious needs assistance and displacement assistance. The second is to cut red tape and expand eligibility to reach more people and help them recover faster while building back stronger. This includes removing loan application requirements, helping underinsured survivors, simplifying assistance for entrepreneurs, expanding habitability criteria, and making accessibility improvements. The third is to simplify the application process to meet survivors' individual needs and meet people where they are. This includes removing barriers for late applicants by streamlining temporary housing assistance applications, and simplifying the process for appeals.

Mr. Hollis also discussed how to reach out to the Gullah community by culturally appropriate means, through members of the community that they trust, such as the office of a regional administrator. Having someone who is responsible for floodplain management. Mitigation grants, EPA, and FEMA grants are available to help with floodplain planning - as well as the availability of assistance from faith-based and community-based organizations. Mr. Hollis suggested mobilizing faith-based community organizations and their representatives, first responders, and emergency managers to prepare for disasters through a planning and management-level course to train these communities. These organizations and communities include: religious charities, nonprofits such as the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, affiliated and unaffiliated churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and NGOs.

6. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

Thomas Barnwell Jr. thanked all the hard work of Mr. Hollis and the council. Mr. Barnwell asked the council how much of this year and next years' budget would address drainage in each community. He specifically mentioned the areas around Marshland Road, Spanish Wells, Chaplin, and Squire Pope needing drainage attention.

Ms. Louise Miller Cohen thanked the Council, Mr. Hollis, and the town for their help in the Gullah communities. Ms. Cohen also addressed the need for improved drainage on Hilton Head Island.

Mr. Hollis brought up the historical restoration of Gullah artifacts and buildings at the Gullah Museum, and asked the Council to address a problem with the current LMO (Land Management Ordinance) regulations. Mr. Hollis stated that there is no direction in the current LMO for historical restoration or cultural and educational institutions, only for residential or commercial activities, and asked the council to consider adding this to the updated LMO.

7. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

APPROVED: October 14, 2024

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