



## **Town of Hilton Head Island**

### **Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Meeting**

**Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 10:00 AM  
1 Town Center Court, Hilton Head Island, SC  
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers**

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- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Approval of the Minutes**
  - a. Regular Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2024
- 4. Unfinished Business**
  - a. 2024-19 Wayfinding Solution Development Update - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation
  - b. Small Business Loan Program Update - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation
  - c. Real-Estate Loan Program Update - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation
- 5. Consideration of Proposed Meeting Dates for 2025**
  - a. Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Meetings - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation
- 6. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items**
- 7. Adjournment**

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Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Civility Pledge:

"I pledge to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others and their viewpoints, and finding solutions for the betterment of my city or town."



Town of Hilton Head Island  
GULLAH GEECHEE HISTORIC  
NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION MEETING  
Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 10:00 AM  
Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Board Members Present: Shirley “Peaches” Peterson; David Ames; Alex Brown; Terry Brubaker and Andre White

Board Members Absent: Pastor Louis Johnson

Adoption of the Agenda

**Mr. Ames moved to adopt the agenda. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 4-0.**

Approval of the Minutes

Regular Meeting Minutes of September 18, 2024

**Mr. Ames moved to approve. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 4-0.**

Unfinished Business

2024-19 Wayfinding Solution Development Update - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, provided the board with an update on the wayfinding solutions development project. The contracted company, Solaos conducted their initial sight visit November 7-8. The purpose of this visit was to initiate data collection and gather information on proposed sites. During their visit, the contractors engaged with key stakeholders, including representatives from the Town of Hilton Head Island, the Office of Cultural Affairs, and a diverse group of Gullah elders. Solaos is scheduled to return in the first quarter of 2025 to provide an update and document additional assets essential to the project’s success.

The board discussed planned sites for development, how wayfinding will be implemented at these sites, and the hiring of interns to assist in the further development of the app. The board also emphasized the addition of historic cemeteries and the importance of preserving that

information to ensure it is not lost. Collectively, the board felt that an expansion of this project was needed, particularly to enhance accessibility and historical documentation, and agreed that this could be implemented in phase two. Additionally, the board considered opportunities for community engagement and partnerships to support the project's growth.

**Mr. Brown made a motion to give the Executive Director the authorization to more forward with executing phase two of this project to include religious institutions and cemeteries. Mr. Ames seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Chair Peterson asked for public comments. There was no public comment.

The overall discussion was positive, with members expressing enthusiasm for the project's progress and its potential impact. The board looks forward to receiving an update in the coming months.

### New Business

#### Discussion of the Stoney Neighborhood Revitalization Grant Program - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, presented the board with the Stoney Neighborhood Revitalization Grant Program. In his discussion, he detailed that this program will provide support to property owners in the Stoney neighborhood, a community that has been continuously and significantly impacted by the construction and development of Highway 278/William Hilton Parkway since 1956. He further outlined the eligibility requirements, eligible uses of funds, the overall process, and the next steps for the board to consider.

There was discussion regarding proof of ownership for applicants, the verification process, and ensuring accessibility for long-standing property owners who may face challenges in providing traditional documentation. Mr. Boxley assured the board that the proper vetting procedures would be in place to ensure fair and accurate determinations. The board expressed their appreciation for the program's implementation and looked forward to reviewing data and impact assessments as they become available.

Chair Peterson asked for public comments. There was no public comment.

#### Discussion of the Small Business Loan Program - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, presented the board with the Small Business Loan Program. In his discussion, he detailed that the program is designed to address long-standing challenges in accessing capital within the Gullah Geechee business community. The program aims to provide financial assistance ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, depending on the applicant's demonstrated need and available funding. Mr. Boxley further outlined the eligibility requirements,

application process, and next steps, which include a legal review of the program and further development in collaboration with the finance department to ensure compliance and sustainability.

The board discussed potential loan interest rates and the ability to keep them low, outreach strategies to ensure that business owners are aware of the program and understand how to apply. Members also emphasized the importance of financial education resources to help applicants successfully manage and grow their businesses. This initiative aligns with the Town's commitment to fostering sustainable growth and economic opportunity within the Gullah Geechee business community, and the board expressed support for its development and implementation.

Chair Peterson asked for public comments.

Heather Rath: Mrs. Rath addressed the board regarding the challenges Native Islanders face in accessing funding for their businesses. She also highlighted the limited availability of storefront locations should such opportunities arise, emphasizing the need for increased support and resources to foster economic growth within the community.

Discussion of the Real-Estate Loan Program - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, presented the board with the Real Estate Loan Program. This program seeks to address long-standing capital access barriers faced by Gullah Geechee property owners. The program will provide loans ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000, based on the applicant's needs and the availability of funding. Mr. Boxley further detailed the program's eligibility requirements, objectives, and scope, as well as the application process and next steps, which include a legal review of the program and further development in collaboration with the finance department to ensure compliance and sustainability.

Mr. Boxley also discussed ongoing conversations with modular home builders to explore more affordable and sustainable housing options compared to traditional construction. He emphasized that these options could provide high-quality, cost-effective solutions for homeowners while preserving the cultural and historical significance of Gullah Geechee land ownership. The board identified native islanders seeking to retain land ownership as the primary target audience for the program. They also discussed potential challenges, including heirs' property complications, the need for clear land titles, and financial partnerships with local and national banks to expand funding opportunities. The board expressed support for the initiative and recognized the importance of ensuring accessibility and long-term viability for participating property owners.

Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

Chair Peterson asked for public comments. There was no public comment for non agenda items.

## Presentation and Recognitions

### Recognizing the Contributions of Board Member David Ames

Chair Peterson presented Mr. Ames with a gift from the board as a token of appreciation. She sincerely thanked him for his time, dedication, and meaningful contributions, not only to the board but also to the Gullah Geechee community. She acknowledged his efforts in supporting the board's mission, his commitment to preserving and advocating for the cultural and economic well-being of the community, and his role in fostering initiatives that have positively impacted Gullah Geechee residents. The board expressed their gratitude and wished him well in his future endeavors.

### Adjournment

**Mr. Ames moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:13 am. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

**Approved: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The recording of this Meeting can be found on the Town's website at [www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov](http://www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov)**



# TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

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## *Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation*

**TO:** Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation  
**FROM:** Thomas Boxley, Executive Director  
**CC:** Marc Orlando, Town Manager  
**DATE:** February 19, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Discussion of Request for Proposals 2024-19 Wayfinding Solution Development Update

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

No action required. This item is provided as a status update only.

### **BACKGROUND:**

As part of our approved strategic action plan to honor the cultural history of the Gullah Geechee community and enhance tourism, we executed a contract for the development of wayfinding solutions.

### **SUMMARY:**

Wayfinding development is approximately 2 weeks away from completion. There was a delay during the Christmas holiday season due to school being out. The youth intern component is a priority for this project. Anticipating completion: March 1, 2025. Solaos has met the following milestones:

- Sites identified include the following: Old School House Park, Robinson Junior High School, Fish Camp, Fishing Co-op/Rowing and Sailing Center, African American Beaches (to be commemorated at Driessen Beach), Mitchelville.
- Youth interns have been selected – exceeding expectations. 3 groups of 3 youth interns working on different aspects of the application.
- Landing page being developed, branded with Gullah Geechee color palette and logo.

The Solaos team will return in March 2025 to document more of the assets that will be necessary to bring this project to life and to beta test the product. There will be continued asset development and documentation as we move forward. Signage is the next step in the development process.



# TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

## *Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation*

**TO:** Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation  
**FROM:** Thomas Boxley, Executive Director  
**CC:** Marc Orlando, Town Manager  
**DATE:** February 19, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Small Business Loan Program Update

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Small Business Loan Program seeks to address long-standing capital access barriers faced by Gullah Geechee owned businesses and businesses in the historic Gullah Geechee neighborhoods of Hilton Head Island. The program will provide loans ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, based on the applicant's demonstrated need and the availability of funding. This item requires approval by the board of directors. Staff recommends approval of this item.

### **BACKGROUND:**

As part of our strategic action plan to increase access to capital, the CDC is proposing the Small Business Loan program in support of real estate development within the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods.

### **SUMMARY:**

The Small Business Loan Program seeks to address long-standing capital access barriers faced by Gullah Geechee businesses. The program will provide loans ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, based on the applicant's needs and the availability of funding.

### **Eligibility Criteria:**

- Applicants must demonstrate financial need and the ability to repay the loan.
- Required supporting documentation includes:
  - Tax returns
  - Credit report
  - A letter or statement of decline from a traditional financial institution
- Lower credit scores will not be a sole disqualifying factor
- Applicants must operate a business in a historic neighborhood or be business owners of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee decent.
- Applicants must demonstrate that 1 job is supported per \$50,000 borrowed

Program Objectives and Scope:

- Increase the number of new Gullah Geechee owned businesses.
- Provide access to capital for existing Gullah Geechee owned businesses that have experienced financial hardship.
- Increase the number of businesses operating in the historic Gullah Geechee neighborhoods of Hilton Head Island.
- Assist businesses in establishing credit history for future business growth and development.

Program Process:

- Committee consisting of CDC staff and Town Finance department representative will review applications.
- Committee will determine funding eligibility.
- Meeting scheduled with applicant for further review.
- Applicant notified of approval or decline.
- If approved applicant moves to loan closing phase.
- Award meeting, fund distribution.
- Applicant will be responsible for quarterly reporting

Loan Terms:

Terms will be developed on a case-by-case basis, with a maximum loan term of five years. There will be no penalties for early repayment of loan principal.

Next Steps:

Pending approval by the board of directors, the program will begin accepting applications in March 2025.



# TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

## *Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation*

**TO:** Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation  
**FROM:** Thomas Boxley, Executive Director  
**CC:** Marc Orlando, Town Manager  
**DATE:** February 19, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Real Estate Loan Program Update

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Real Estate Loan Program seeks to address long-standing barriers to capital experienced by Gullah Geechee landowners with property holdings in the historic Gullah Geechee neighborhoods of Hilton Head Island. The program will provide loans ranging from \$50,000 to \$200,000, based on the applicant's demonstrated need and the availability of funding. This item requires approval by the board of directors. Staff recommends approval of this item.

### **BACKGROUND:**

As part of our approved strategic action plan to increase access to capital, the CDC is proposing this program in support of the Gullah Geechee community with the purpose of supporting real estate development in the historic Gullah neighborhoods.

### **SUMMARY:**

The real estate loan program will support the Gullah Geechee community that has experienced barriers regarding access to capital, specifically in support of highest and best use of land that supports property owner goals. This program will provide financial support for eligible applicants.

### **Eligibility Criteria:**

Applicants must demonstrate financial need and the ability to repay the loan.

- Required supporting documentation includes:
  - Tax returns
  - Credit report
  - A letter or statement of decline from a traditional financial institution
- Clear title to the property
- Lower credit scores will not be a sole disqualifying factor

Eligible Funding Uses:

- Site improvements
- New construction
- Renovations to existing structures

Program Objectives and Scope:

- Increase access to capital for underserved historic neighborhoods of Hilton Head Island.
- Promote manageable land value appreciation through the development of stable, permanent housing solutions.
- Support the development of revenue streams for residents who own land but lack the capital for its development.

Program Process:

- Committee consisting of CDC staff and Town Finance department will review and score applications.
- Committee will determine funding eligibility
- Meeting scheduled with applicant for further review
- Applicant notified of approval or decline.
- If approved, applicant moves into the loan closing phase
- Fund distribution process will be coordinated with the Town of Hilton Head's finance department.
- Applicant responsible for quarterly reporting.

Award Range:

\$50,000 - \$200,000 – based on funding availability

Loan Terms:

Terms will be determined on a case-by-case basis, with a maximum term of five years. There will be no penalties for early repayment of loan principal. Loan is not transferrable. If property is sold, loan balance becomes due.

Next Steps:

Pending approval by the board of directors, the program will begin accepting applications in March 2025.



# TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

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*Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods  
Community Development Corporation*

**TO:** Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation  
**FROM:** Thomas Boxley, Executive Director  
**CC:** Marc Orlando, Town Manager  
**DATE:** February 19, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Consideration of Proposed Meeting Dates for 2025

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

This item requires approval by the board of directors. Staff recommends approval of the calendar year 2025 meeting dates

**SUMMARY:**

In preparation for the 2025 calendar year, we are proposing this slate of dates for meetings. The meetings in the months of April, July, October and January of 2026 will be hosted at a community-based location at 6pm.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Calendar Year 2025 meeting dates



Town of Hilton Head Island  
Gullah Geechee Historic  
Neighborhoods Community  
Development Corporation

## 2025 Meeting Schedule

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<b>MEETING DATES</b>
February 19, 2025
March 19, 2025
*April 16, 2025
May 21, 2025
June 18, 2025
*July 16, 2025
August 20, 2025
September 17, 2025
*October 15, 2025
November 19, 2025
December 17, 2025
*January 21, 2026

Regular meetings are held at 10:00 A.M. on the third Wednesday of every month unless otherwise notified. \*Community meetings are held at 6 P.M. on the third Wednesday of every month unless otherwise notified.