



The Town of Hilton Head Island
**Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural
Preservation Task Force
Meeting Minutes
August 7, 2023, 1:00 p.m.**

Present from the Task Force: Chairman Lavon Stevens; Vice Chairman Palmer E. Simmons; Tom Henz; Ibrahim Abdul-Malik; Shani Green

Present from Town Council: Alex Brown

Absent from the Task Force: John Campbell, Joyce Wright

Present from Town Staff: Richard Edwards, *Community Planning Manager*; Chris Yates, *Building Official*; Shea Farrar, *Principal Planner*; Krishana Perry, *Principal Planner – Historic Neighborhood Preservation*; Michael Connolly, *Senior Planner*; Trey Lowe, *Senior Planner*; Karen Knox, *Senior Administrative Assistant*

1. Call to Order

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

2. FOIA Compliance

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the Town of Hilton Head Island.

3. Roll Call

As noted above.

4. Approval of Agenda

Chairman Stevens asked for a Motion to approve the Agenda. Vice Chair Simmons moved to approve. Mr. Henz seconded. By a show of hands, the Agenda was approved by a vote of 5-0.

5. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Stevens asked for a Motion to approve the Minutes of June 5, 2023. Mr. Henz moved to approve. Vice Chair Simmons seconded. By a show of hands, the Minutes of June 5, 2023, was approved by a vote of 4-0. Ms. Green was not present at the June 5, 2023 meeting.

6. Appearance by Citizens

No comments were received on the Open Town Hall Portal. One citizen spoke at the meeting.

7. Staff Report

a. General Staff Updates

i. Work Plan Updates

Ms. Perry reported on general activities out in the Community and shared that there will be an upcoming Quarterly Report.

ii. Community Planning Manager Introduction

Mr. Richard Edwards introduced himself to the Task Force and advised that he will be working with Krishana and the Task Force on all the projects that the Task Force has moving forward.

iii. LMO Amendments Update

Mr. Edwards advised that Phase 4A FAR and Single Family Parking Regulations was reviewed by the Planning Commission on April 27, 2023. The Planning Commission recommended it to Town Council for approval as written by staff with a few modifications. We are anticipating that Phase 4 will go to the Public Planning Committee on September 20, 2023. The RFQ closed for Phase 5 on July 25, 2023. We received two proposals. Staff are currently reviewing those proposals. Our comments are due to Procurement by the end of August.

iv. District Planning Update

The Marshes went to the Public Planning Committee on July 13, 2023 for a review. The current draft is on the website. We are working with our Consultant to get a Community Survey and updated Plan from the Public Planning Committee comments. The Bridge to Beach District is scheduled to go to the Public Planning Committee on September 14, 2023. Once that goes to the Public Planning Committee, we will put the Community Survey online as well as the updated Plan. At Public Planning Committee's August 10, 2023 meeting we will be working to prioritize the rest of the remaining Districts. Mr. Edwards answered several questions from the Task Force.

b. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report

Ms. Perry provided an update on the Design Studio as included in the Packet. Ms. Perry mentioned she would like to transition reporting by calendar year once we get through 2023. From the period October, 2021 – July 28, 2023, we have received 63 Design Studio requests. For this Report, we have received three new requests. We were able to complete those three new requests and we also completed one of our active projects.

Ms. Perry then proceeded to review in depth, the Family Compound and Family Subdivision as included in the Packet and reminded the Task Force that in November, 2019, Town Council approved the framework for the Gullah Geechee Preservation Progress Report that was created in a collaborative effort between Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force and Town staff in amending the LMO to allow property owners to establish Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions which was identified as a top priority project that relates to our public policy recommendation 2, 3, 5 and 6. These applications and the way that we handle them through the process

covers both recommendations. After Ms. Perry's presentation, she answered questions from the Task Force.

c. Home Safety and Repair Program Update

i. Program Manager Introduction

Mr. Chris Yates introduced himself to the Task Force and provided an in-depth presentation on the activity of the Home Safety and Repair Program as included in the packet. Following his presentation, he answered questions from the Task Force.

d. Sewer Connection Program Update

Mr. Yates provided the presentation as included in the packet. Following his presentation, he answered questions from the Task Force.

8. Discussion Items

a. Land Preservation

Ms. Luana Graves Sellars thanked the Task Force for the opportunity to speak at today's meeting. We have been in the process of trying to get a handle on an updated number of acreage that is owned by Gullah families. We are still figuring it out. The initial numbers back in 2017 was 1,016 acres. Right now, we are at around 1,000. A revised number is about 993. There are still some properties that are in question. With that being said, I believe that number will be less. Once we have a full idea what it is and specifically the total of the acres that are left, I will come back and give you a final neighborhood by neighborhood report. Ms. Graves Sellars reminded the Task Force that October 1, 2023, is the upcoming Tax Sale. So far on Hilton Head, we have 67 properties which comes to approximately \$119,000 in taxes that are due. The closer we get, the more the list shakes out. For your September meeting I will have a better handle. After that, it is a week to week process up to the sale. The Report after that will be in October and that will be based on where we are, what happened and who we were able to help. Ms. Graves Sellars also made the Task Force aware that assessments are coming. Their Report will be coming out in the 1st and 2nd week of September.

Ms. Graves Sellars mentioned that they have been doing several Workshops – one of the Workshops that is coming up is with Ebony Sanders who is the Assessor. She will be able to answer specific questions. We also had a Free Wills Clinic in April, Land Use and Forestry Workshop on June 10, 2023. We just had a Workshop on Untangling Heirs' Property on July 15, 2023. We have an additional Wills Clinic set up for August 12, 2023 at Penn Center with an additional Wills Clinic on Hilton Head Island in October. Maria Walls, Beaufort County Treasurer will be on the Island August 26, 2023, to answer pre-Tax Sale questions. Ms. Graves Sellars answered questions from the Task Force after her presentation.

b. Heritage Library Heir's Property Presentation

Ms. Linda Piekut, Project Director from the Heritage Library provided the presentation as included in the Packet and gave and gave and gave a step-by-step review regarding the Heirs' Property Family Research Process. After her presentation, Ms. Piekut answered questions from the Task Force. The Task Force thanked Ms. Piekut for her thorough presentation.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Submitted by: Karen Knox
Senior Administrative Assistant

Approved: September 11, 2023