



The Town of Hilton Head Island  
**Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural  
Preservation Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
September 11, 2023, 1:00 p.m.**

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

**Present from Town Council:** Alex Brown; Patsy Brison

**Absent from the Task Force:** Joyce Wright; Shani Green

**Present from Town Staff:** Richard Edwards, *Community Planning Manager*; Nicte Barrientos; Planner-Economic Development; Karen Knox, *Senior Administrative Assistant*

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**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**

Before calling the roll, Chairman Stevens asked for a moment of silence in memory of September 11, 2001.

**4. Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Stevens asked for a Motion to approve the Agenda. Mr. Abdul-Malik moved to approve. Mr. Henz seconded. By a show of hands, the Agenda was approved by a vote of 4-0.

**5. Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Stevens asked for a Motion to approve the Minutes of August 7, 2023. Mr. Henz moved to approve. Mr. Simmons seconded. By a show of hands, the Minutes of August 7, 2023, was approved by a vote of 4-0.

**6. Appearance by Citizens**

No comments were received on the Open Town Hall Portal.

**7. Staff Report**

a. General Staff Updates

i. Work Plan Update

Richard Edwards advised the Committee that Krishana Perry has left the Town and thanked her for her service. Mr. Edwards mentioned that Nicté Barrientos and himself will be working closely with the Board and that Alexis Cook and Trey Lowe will be helping with our Design Studios.

Mr. Edwards stated staff is working together with the Communications Department to transition the filming of the Cultural Education Program over to them.

ii. District Planning and LMO Updates

District Planning

Mr. Edwards mentioned staff is currently working on the Marshes with our Consultants to get postcards to go out via mail for public comment. The card will have a code or address on it so people can go onto the website and fill out an online survey.

Staff will be presenting an update on Bridge to Beach to the Public Planning Committee Meeting on September 14, 2023.

This month, staff will begin looking at Forest Beach and Skull Creek Districts. Skull Creek has quite a few historic neighborhoods so staff will be reaching out to you and citizens for input.

LMO

Staff decided to readvertise Phase V which is the full Code Rewrite. We are redrafting the RFQ now. We are not anticipating even selecting a Consultant until the end of the year on Phase V.

Phase 4A which is the FAR and Parking – this got pushed back to Public Planning and will be on the Agenda for September 14, 2023. Staff is doing further analysis on the request to examine any unintended consequences, including more research on exactly what these regulations will do to Historic Neighborhoods.

Phase 4 is currently in legal review and staff is anticipating this Phase going to the Planning Commission in November 2023.

After his presentation, Mr. Edwards answered questions on both District Planning and LMO Updates from the Committee.

b. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report

Mr. Edwards stated we only received one new request this month and it was preservation of an Heirs property. Ms. Luana Graves Sellars mentioned that she was part of that meeting, and she has taken over the responsibility in working with that family.

c. Home Safety and Repair Program Update

Mr. Edwards stated we currently have 24 projects under Contract – 10 new projects being prepared to be sent out for bid and nine tree removal projects that are underway or completed.

d. Sewer Connection Program Update

Mr. Edwards stated we have 20 applications that have received a Town letter of approval. Work has not been scheduled yet on two projects. 18 projects are underway, four of them have been completed. This month we received one new application.

## 8. Discussion Items

a. Land Preservation Update

Luana Graves Sellars started out by mentioning that the Tax Sale is coming up and as of July, 49 properties on the Island still had not paid their taxes. We are monitoring the list on a weekly basis to make sure that everyone is taken care of. There have been some properties on the Island that have asked for assistance.

Ms. Sellars gave the Task Force a presentation on the Land Preservation numbers and advised that from the R-UDAT Study Count in 1995 of 3,500 acres overall to the first land recount in 2017 shows a decrease of 736.63 acres. Current neighborhood estimate of 2,763.37 to today's count 958.55 shows a decrease of 1,804.82 acres. Ms. Sellars reviewed neighborhood by neighborhood, including Baygall, Big Hill, Big Stoney Chaplin, Gardner, Grassland, Jarvis, Jonesville, Little Stoney, Marshland, Mitchelville, Old House Creek, Spanish Wells and Squire Pope.

Ms. Sellars also advised the Task Force that on October 7, 2023 there will be an Untangling Heirs' Property Workshop at the Penn Center.

After Ms. Sellars' presentation she answered questions from the Task Force.

b. Hilton Head High School Renovation Design Team

Mr. Don Boss, Architect of Little thanked the Task Force for the opportunity to show images for the redesign of Hilton Head Island High School and mentioned their team has been deeply inspired by the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Hilton Head Island, as well as the rich Gullah culture that has shaped this remarkable region.

Our plan is to incorporate elements that pay tribute to Hilton Head Island's breathtaking landscapes and the vibrant Gullah traditions. We believe this approach will not only create a unique and captivating environment but also foster a sense of connection to the Island's rich history.

Mr. Boss and his Team asked the Task Force to contact them with any ideas or suggestions they have for the renovation.

## 9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

**Submitted by:** Karen Knox  
Senior Administrative Assistant

**Approved:** November 6, 2023