

**TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND**  
**Venue Committee Meeting**  
**April 20, 2017 – 9:00a.m.**  
**Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers**

Committee Members Present: Chairman Cindy Creamer, Vice Chairman Jane Joseph, Karen Attaway, Dan Castro, Juliann Foster, Rex Garniewicz, Florry Gibbes, Terry Herron, Bob Lee, Tim Ridge, Suzanne Thompson

Committee Members Absent: Charlie Clark, Gil Campbell, Lili Coleman, Gregg Russell

Town Council Present: Kim Likins, Tom Lennox, David Ames

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Ray, Planning & Special Projects Manager; Tom Fultz, Director of Administrative Services; Teresa Haley, Senior Administrative Assistant

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**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Creamer called the meeting to order at 9:00a.m.

**2. Freedom of Information Act Compliance**

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

**3. Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Creamer requested a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Mr. Castro moved to approve. Ms. Foster seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

**4. Approval of Minutes – April 5, 2017**

Chairman Creamer requested a motion to approve the minutes of the April 5, 2017 meeting. Ms. Attaway moved to approve. Mr. Ridge seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

**5. New Business**

- a) Discussion and Development of Recommendations to Town Council based on Task Team investigations and Webb Management Recommendations

The Committee discussed the recommendations as set forth in the attached Exhibit A. The Committee voted on the final recommendations as follows:

- Community Arts Center

Ms. Attaway moved to approve based upon the discussion described in the attached Exhibit A. Mr. Castro seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

- A large hall in Beaufort County

Mr. Ridge moved to approve based upon the discussion described in the attached Exhibit A. Ms. Gibbes seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

- Mitchelville and other heritage assets

Mr. Castro moved to approve based upon the discussion described in the attached Exhibit A. Ms. Attaway seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

- Coastal Discovery Museum

Mr. Garniewicz moved to approve based upon the discussion described in the attached Exhibit A. Mr. Castro seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

- Community Gathering and Event Areas

Mr. Garniewicz moved to approve based upon the discussion described in the attached Exhibit A. Mr. Castro seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

- Culinary Heritage

Ms. Thompson moved to approved based upon the discussion described in the attached Exhibit A. Mr. Ridge seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

Ms. Gibbes made a motion to forward the Venue Committee's final recommendations to the Community Services Committee for approval. Mr. Ridge seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 11-0-0.

- b) Schedule Discussion: Meetings of Venue Committee, Community Services Committee and Town Council

The Committee's recommendations are scheduled to be presented at the May 8 meeting of the Community Services Committee and the June 6 meeting of Town Council.

## **6. Appearance by Citizens**

Public comments received related to the following: suggestion to rethink examining a large hall on island; various ways to conduct a survey; suggestion to focus on millennials; and Webb's presentation.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42a.m.

Submitted by: Teresa Haley, Senior Administrative Assistant

Approved: June 22, 2017

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Cindy Creamer, Chairman

## EXHIBIT A

### **Venue Committee Recommendations**

**From April 20, 2017 Meeting**

#### **Community Arts Center**

*The most basic facility which Hilton Head as a community needs, is a Community Arts Center which can provide a combination of rentals, presentations, educational programs, outreach activities. Visual artists in particular lack space for teaching and related programs and continue to need space for exhibiting.*

*The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina has the physical attributes to become this space and was designed to serve a set of community based groups.*

*It would seem reasonable for the Town to invest in the Arts Center if that organization is prepared and able to re-formulate its business model to become more of a community arts center rather than being dominated by self-produced theatre. Certainly, the request for funding for technical equipment upgrades, which is valid, is easier for the Town to justify if the Arts Center is able to respond to the community's need for an arts center.*

*If the Arts Center is not prepared to make that change, we would encourage the Town to consider other options and possibilities for a community arts center, ideally through the adaptive re-use of some other existing structure.*

The Committee agrees that we need a Community Arts Center. The definition of organizations that are potential renters/users of the Center should be expanded and could include non-Entertainment, Arts, Culture and History (EACH) organizations, such as business meetings and community organizations as well as summer youth programs, visual artist studio space and rehearsal space. Right now there is insufficient space that is available and/or affordable for many smaller EACH organizations.

The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina (ACCC) was designed to serve community based organizations. In addition, plans exist for potential additions to the complex that were never implemented but the additional required parking is no longer available (vertical parking option might resolve this issue).

We don't know that the building currently has the physical attributes to become a community center. The Committee believes that a review of the building needs to occur based on the agreed upon usage model for the building and that all costs to repair, redecorate, functionally enhance (e.g. modifications to make it effective for the designated uses) and bring to Hilton Head "standard" need to be identified. This would be a follow-on activity done by Webb Management subsequent to an agreement on Community Arts Center business model (see next item).

The Arts Center Building is the Committee's first choice for a Community Arts Center for Hilton Head if the both the Arts Center organization and Town can agree to a business

model for a “Community Arts Center”. We recommend that Webb should conduct this work and that it is a high priority. It should include a space usage recommendation (e.g. rehearsal space in the building vs. finding space outside), programming recommendation, staffing/expertise requirement and financing information (revenue, expense, rental pricing) to ensure that it is a sustainable model. The contract should also include clear expectations, measurement and oversight requirements. A timeframe for this agreement should be put in place so both parties can move forward.

We recommend that the Webb Phase II Scope of Work contain a requirement that the timeframe for resolution of the decision by the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina to meet the necessary model as a Community Arts center be completed within 90 days of the start of Webb’s Phase II contract.

If the Town and Arts Center come to such an agreement, the Town should financially assist the Arts Center with the lighting issues that were previously requested. This assistance should include a re-evaluation of the technical equipment upgrade in terms of the new programming model.

A recommendation addressing the sale/leaseback of the Arts Center property should be included during the 90 day Phase II scope.

If no agreement is reached, the Committee will make a recommendation within the 90-day timeframe regarding other options or possibilities for a community arts center.

## **A large hall in Beaufort County**

*We would recommend the development of a new mid-size multi-purpose hall for music, dance, theater, film, speakers and other events with a capacity range between 1,200 and 1,500 seats.*

*There are over 100 days of demand from key groups on the island (Hilton Head Symphony, Hilton Head Choral Society, Hilton Head Dance, and the World Affairs Council of Hilton Head) for such a hall. In addition, the University of South Carolina- Beaufort has interest in expanding its arts programs and could be a potential partner in the development of such a project.*

*A mainland location, in proximity to I-95, would provide increased access to touring product traveling between Charleston and Savannah and as well as the growing populations in Bluffton and, potentially, Jasper County. Discussions of such a facility are already taking place in Bluffton, as the community and Beaufort County consider the future of Hilton Head National Golf Club.*

The Committee fully agrees that a large hall is needed to serve the growing Hilton Head Island (HHI) organizations lacking a suitable venue. A multi-purpose, flexible space design would expand its usage beyond formal performances.

- Accommodates commercial rentals, social group events, and exhibitions.
- Hosts weddings, business seminars, art showings in a well-designed lobby with food & beverage catering available.
- Allows for more performances/more flexible programming and improves potential for audience growth
- Facilitates broader audience participation through more ticket pricing options
- Improves audience experience (facilities, catering options)
- Provides the opportunity to attract groups in the shoulder seasons when outdoor events are not viable - e.g. Historical, Educational, and Religious gatherings.

The demand assessment takes into consideration only organizations based in Hilton Head Island as they currently stand. However, if a hall of this size were developed, we can see much additional demand:

- HHI-based organizations are planning to alter their programming when this space comes to fruition, increasing demand.
- Other off-island organizations would likely have interest in utilizing this space as well.
- A myriad of programming is available from promoters, or other organizations in the county, including presenting shows & business gatherings needing space beyond hotel ballrooms.
- Lobby bookings increase usage.

The Committee also agreed that the building concept/design must be done first in order to determine the amount and type of space needed to accommodate the planned uses for the Hall. That information will provide data to identify locations that would be appropriate and available.

The Committee is concerned about making the decision to locate such a hall on the mainland at this point in the evaluation process. We recommend that both on-island and off-island options should be kept open:

Bluffton:

We support any location off-island that is no further than the intersection of highways 46 and 278. There is strong feedback that HHI residents will not attend events at any site further out than “just over the bridge”. If located at the USCB Hilton Head gateway, there is a concern that few current subscribers would drive past SC-170 for concerts. We have had feedback from groups which would like to utilize a new facility expressing concern over the locations of an off-island venue.

We support Hilton Head National as an option to explore but have great concerns over its viability as a location due to public resistance and lack of serious development plans for the facility. We also have the following caveats:

- The developer will meet certain minimum standards regarding seating and functionality
- It must be built early in the development project
- The Town of HHI must retain some governance/control over the usage of this venue to ensure our island organizations are protected and can use this space at a reasonable cost and have schedule allowance.

Other concerns about an off-island site include:

- Affects Hilton Head Island Accommodations Tax (ATAX) funding for occupants moving from HHI
- May negatively impact revenue from subscribers/donors
- Negatively impacts Island businesses (restaurants, etc.)
- Hilton Head Island loses some branding advantage by not having a resident symphony
- It may be very difficult to bring HHI, Bluffton and Beaufort together to get this done although we believe that having a facility available to the whole Region is very valuable.

Hilton Head:

- Experience supports the notion that being closer to I-95 than HHI for performers is negligible.
- Although population growth is off island, 2.5 million visitors come to HHI. This is a major source of Arts revenue and economic impact for HHI.
- HHI has the affluent senior population who support EACH providers.
- HHI has the infrastructure, hotels and beach that attract visitors, who prefer Island-based events – such as festivals, shows, and concerts.
- Local organizations need a venue for large events, such as large dinners because the Island hotels give priority to bookings for multi-night usage or to events with clients staying at the hotel.

Concerns about a Hilton Head location:

- Limited land options for a major venue

- Road and bridge traffic issues which would need to be validated
- Parking issues

Therefore, key criteria for determining location will be the availability of land/parking and minimizing traffic issues.

We recommend that Webb Management proceed with a Phase II activity to define the programming, facility building concept, location and financial model for a multi-purpose facility. This activity should be completed in a four-month window.

A review of Hilton Head Island ATAX rules affecting local organizations that might be performing at an off-Island site needs to be done during Phase II to allow Webb to evaluate the financial impact of ATAX funding on the organizations. This should be part of a larger financial analysis of this multi-purpose hall.

In parallel with Webb's Phase II work, the Venue Committee should contact large venue management companies to obtain their evaluation of the feasibility of a multi-purpose hall in Beaufort County and including facility features, market demand, location and their interest in helping to design and manage such a facility.

## **Mitchelville and other heritage assets**

*Mitchelville is widely recognized as Hilton Head Island's 'hidden gem'. The park, on its own, has significant local, regional, and national importance. Combined with other regional heritage sites, it could become part of a greater regional trail network within the larger Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor, also connecting to the National Park Service and their recent work on the Reconstruction Era Monument. These efforts could strengthen the island's connection with its own history and heritage and impact visitation to the island in significant ways.*

*Yet, despite this potential, little progress has been made in recent years. The Town has committed to provide two years of financial support for an Executive Director for Mitchelville and is leasing the park to the Mitchelville Preservation Project for a nominal amount.*

*We would endorse the idea that the Town proceed with various investments in Mitchelville. However, we would encourage a more active partnership that ties those investments to a series of Town-mandated goals around program development, organizational development, and partnerships.*

Mitchelville is a strong option to attract a significant national audience and would improve our reputation as a diverse and welcoming community, attracting a new segment of visitors. Additionally, having a key historical attraction on the Island could open up another source of tourism revenue for the Town. A key first step is to bring the new Executive Director on board. A key skill for this individual is getting grant funds. There is a great deal of competition for these funds but it will be a critical element. Funding for children's programming is easier to obtain.

We recommend that it should be included in the overall Venue plan. We recommend that Webb management work with the Town and the Mitchelville leadership to agree on measureable goals for the Town and Mitchelville partnership. We recommend that the Town support any requests from the Mitchelville leadership to contact representatives from the National Park Service and/or other historically themed attractions or a consultant specializing in Heritage sites, to obtain their input on how to successfully develop and market this site.

We also believe that there should be a continued close collaboration between the Mitchelville Project and the Coastal Discovery Museum in order to utilize their expertise and resources in this area.

For the longer term the Town plan should add other heritage assets such as the Civil War and Reconstruction sites, Gullah/Geechee culture, and Native American archeological sites.

## Coastal Discovery Museum

*The Coastal Discovery Museum is an important cultural asset for Hilton Head Island as it speaks to such critical issues as the environment, land, and the culture of the Lowcountry. The Museum runs many programs of interest to full-time and seasonal residents and their families. And, they are an attractive and well-run destination for visitors to the island, effectively becoming a clearing-house for a range of other attractions and amenities.*

*Within the recently completed strategic plan are goals to add and improve facilities that will allow the Museum to accept touring exhibitions made possible by its Smithsonian affiliation.*

*We endorse this plan and would encourage the Town to consider how it might support the expansion, as and when the Museum's needs become more defined.*

The Committee fully supports Coastal Discovery Museum's (CDM) current strategy of a flexible, large exhibition space at Honey Horn to bring in world class exhibits during the high tourist season, which can be broken down during the shoulder seasons into smaller spaces for local groups (e.g. art shows, art for sale, chamber music). Also the strategy includes a space to accommodate 200 theater type seats. The space should be self-sustainable or profitable from an expense standpoint, achievable by selecting the appropriate exhibitions. CDM could also consider making it a unique Visitor Center. Current estimate is 10,000 sq. ft.

In addition, the CDM is pursuing a strategy of Responsible Development: the intent to be a collaborator and partner with the town and use the property to serve the community in ways that don't impact the natural beauty of the community. Examples would be pop-up concerts, including outdoor symphony performances such as Symphony under the Stars.

The Committee believes this should be a joint partnership between the CDM, Town of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County since it would serve the population within a three-hour drive.

We recommend that Webb management work with the Town and CDM leadership to agree on measureable goals for the Town and CDM partnership.

The CDM should continue to refine the plan and work with other arts/cultural organizations on the island to identify potential users of the space and their specific usage needs.

The financials for this project should be considered along with the other recommendations to ensure that appropriate funding can be allocated to this museum space.

## Community Gathering and Event Areas

*There is a recognized need in the community for gathering space. While Coligny and Shelter Cove have been successful, the Town could go further in its attempt to create public gathering space, with more integrated planning that can support the local art and music scene, local retailers, and festivals.*

*We are thinking particularly of younger people and families and the different ways that they might choose to participate in the arts and culture.*

*Such spaces might include more formal performance and festival locations, less formal park-settings, and more village or urban gathering places.*

*This is a longer-term effort for Town and Village planners, thinking about how open space might be protected and used for events, how other areas might be upgraded, and how commercial concentrations might be planned and developed to include a Village square.*

This recommendation involves short and long term planning and implementation for three different types of spaces: Performance/festival locations, park settings and village gathering places.

The Committee agrees that the highest priority of these spaces is the performance/festival location, or outdoor event space for several reasons.

- Could be used for multiple organizations; festivals, events, symphony, other groups
- Provides opportunity for residents and visitors to experience community outdoors - Multi-generational appeal – youth, adults, families – informal
- Would accommodate wide variety of musical genres – classical, pop, contemporary, jazz, Latino, African-American, Gospel
- HHI has a proven track record for successful outdoor presentations
- Simple construction – raised pad/covered stage, power, parking - A quick build, modest cost
- “Lock it and Leave it” feature
- High revenue potential – 5000 lawn capacity, major performers. Can be an economic engine for the entire EACH program, following the model that as many other Towns have used
- Serves as Community Park for festivals needing 5000+ capacity
- When events are not booked, can revert to athletic fields
- Hilton Head’s climate provides up to eight month’s usage
- This could be located by itself or paired with another venue depending on location and space requirements.

We recommend this Committee look at creating a permanent outdoor performance space on Hilton Head to attract the potential for different kinds of entertainment and audiences, addressing the interests of more diverse members of our community.

To accomplish this, we recommend Webb and local experts form a task team to look into the venue possibility, including determining what would be needed to build, considering permanent seating and a covered stage, and where to locate.

- Our Committee already has a list of available properties.
- Honey Horn should be considered for “pop up” (temporary) event space. Although this temporary space is more expensive for setup and cleanup for each show, this venue has already been successful in serving concerts for audiences of 5,000 to 7,000. It also includes parking.
- We suggest and favor a beachfront/waterfront location to create a unique experience that would fit well into the Hilton Head brand if such a site were available.

Hilton Head needs to have a fun gathering space – a place where people “must” go. In the longer term, the Town should be looking at creating gathering spaces as areas of the Island are developed or redeveloped. We recommend this goal become a consideration in every Town review of development/redevelopment on the Island, as well as an integral part of the Town’s visioning process.

- We need to be creative in our thought processes - for example, looking at the roof lines as an area of potential development/use.
- We recommend exploring the concept of a cultural district/area, potentially completed as a private endeavor with Town support and encouragement. This would help rejuvenate pockets of the Island.

## **Culinary Heritage**

*Finally, we see a tremendous opportunity to rediscover Hilton Head Island's food and farming heritage; firstly, by re-planting portions of the island and, secondly, through the establishment of a regional farm-to-table program.*

*From a facility perspective, perhaps the best first step would be to attract a culinary institute to the island. This could serve as a catalyst for a series of food-as-culture initiatives, all of which could have a significant impact on the quality of life for full-time and senior residents and form the basis of new cultural and heritage tourism.*

*The University of South Carolina at Beaufort is developing a facility on Hilton Head specifically for hospitality management. It will have a kitchen, but is intended more for internal teaching uses.*

We support the concept of food-as-culture and culinary arts as a quality of life benefit and tourism attraction, improving the HHI brand. This could also fill in for reduction in golf tourism and support the idea of HHI as eco-friendly. Rediscovering the Island's food and farming heritage and farm-to-table programs is also a positive idea. Some time in the future, it could be desirable to have a culinary institute on the Island, but this would not be a priority for the Committee now.

Our approach would be for the Town to support an initiative to bring together for profit and non-profit organizations with an interest and capability to spearhead and develop this type of project. There are many opportunities work with the Restaurant industry, health institutions and schools to put this in motion which should provide the financial commitment. Later if University of South Carolina, Beaufort (USCB), Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL) or other organization is interested in creating a Culinary Institute on the Island, the Town should support them.

This project of expanding food/cuisine offerings and visibility should be part of the Town's visioning process which could then help to gather the interested people and organizations. Members of the Venue Committee are interested in this project and have volunteered to represent the Venue Committee in that process.

Examples of ideas to consider might be:

- A 501[c] 3 non-profit (e.g. within the Community Foundation of the Low Country).
- A town sponsored Think Tank or Forum to solicit a "team".
- To be successful, Native Islanders and members of the Latino community need be involved.
- Celebrate Hilton Head as a farming community (to include historic crops such as indigo, rice and cotton) while exploring maritime farming (shrimping oyster harvesting fishing, etc.).

## **A Vision for New Facilities**

*Note: The following five bullets are the final summary items that Webb presented as a justification for moving forward and taking action on his recommendations.*

- *Recommendations are not a menu but set of investments to be viewed together.*
- *These investments will increase property values, enhance quality of life, and make HHI profile a destination.*
- *Opportunity for HHI to be part of regional planning, locating facilities sensibly, working with public/private partners for greater good.*
- *Build a capital project plan with funding and sustainable over time for the collective group of projects.*
- *Set priorities and define Town role in advancing plan.*

The Venue Committee adds:

- The Webb report has brought great positive excitement about the subject of EACH venues and demonstrated that the potential economic impact for our Island is enormous.
- Other resort towns and communities are doing this successfully.
- We have a solid base of EACH providers in place that are primed for growth.
- The Arts & Culture Destination goal is an excellent fit for HHI.

We believe it is critical to consider these recommendations as a long term set of investments that must be viewed as a package.

These recommendations have different time elements. Some can be brought to fruition more quickly and easily, while others will take some time to develop. It is important to ensure that any action does not preclude the completion of other items listed.

We should not assume support of this vision means that the Town will take on full financial responsibility for these venues. These must be public/private partnerships and we should be working with the County and the State as well as businesses and individual donors to develop financial support.

Together, these recommends cover diverse members of the population and helps solidify Hilton Head's brand. There is ample evidence from the Arts & Cultural Strategic Planning (ACSP) Committee report and anecdotal evidence to support these benefits, including the increase to property values.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

Additional investigation is necessary to move these ideas forward and prioritize recommendations.

Many of the recommendations can progress concurrently, as they will be multi-year projects.

The Committee recommends moving forward with a Phase II\* (see definition below) contract with Webb Management as quickly as possible to include the following:

1. Resolve the Arts Center recommendation. This has been an urgent need for some time. Webb should participate in discussion between Arts Center and Town to provide objectivity and achieve timing. Key tasks include:
  - a. Defining Business Model with ACCC and Town
  - b. Determining Repair/Upgrade Cost for New Usage
  - c. Evaluate the sale/leaseback proposal
2. With input from potential regional partners, determine the concept design and future location (Bluffton or Hilton Head Island) of a mid-sized multi-purpose hall. Once this is determined, proceed with planning, fundraising and development, in collaboration with regional partners.
3. Work with the Town and Mitchelville leadership to define measureable goals for the partnership between the Town and Mitchelville as they proceed with their planning/fundraising/development activities.
4. Work with the Town and CDM leadership to define measureable goals for the partnership between the Town and the CDM.
5. Determine the infrastructure requirements and future location of an outdoor event space.

\*“Phase Two, if needed, includes concept development, physical planning, the beginning of site discussion, a business plan for new and/or improved facilities, and beginning the work of testing the capacity in the community to support the project that has been recommended. The purpose of this work is to provide the information and confidence to move forward with a decision.”

The Committee and Town should proceed with the following:

1. Continue with joint plan between the Town and the Coastal Discovery Museum for building expansion. (Town)
2. Incorporate plans for “Village Squares” into the Town’s long-term strategic plan. (Town)
3. Participate in the Visioning process to work with other Town stakeholders to advance the Culinary Heritage initiative. (includes Venue Committee representation)
4. Clearly define the Towns vision with regards to EACH in branding and future planning. (Culture & Arts Network Director and Culture & Arts Advisory Committee)

The Committee believes that Phase II should be completed as quickly as possible due to the urgency especially of moving forward on Recommendations for a Community Arts Center and Large Hall. For this reason, the contract for Phase II with Webb should have the following time parameters all measured from the beginning of Phase II:

- Recommendation on Community Arts Center: 90 days
- Recommendation on Large Hall: four months
- Recommendation on Outdoor Event Space: four months

- End of Phase II: five months (allowing time for a reconciliation between the previous three recommendations so that the conclusions of Phase II make sense as a whole)

The subject of surveying citizens for community input on these recommendations has been an issue since the inception of the Venue Committee. The Committee has several questions about such a survey which include:

- The advisability of doing a survey of current citizens for projects that could take many years to complete
- The question of who should be surveyed: HHI citizens, Beaufort county citizens, current visitors, and/or potential visitors.
- The question of when a survey is valuable, i.e. What level of detail needs to be available about the projects? What is the appropriate time in the process?
- The type of survey which might be appropriate: phone, internet, and/or in person
- Is there a better vehicle than a survey to gather and evaluate community input?

The Committee recommends seeking guidance from Webb management, Dr. Salazar (of USCB) and the Town's Visioning consultant to better evaluate the action that should be recommended for this subject as work on Phase II proceeds.