



The Town of Hilton Head Island  
**Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural  
Preservation Task Force Meeting**

**April 5, 2021, 9:00 a.m.**

VIRTUAL VIA BLUEJEANS

## **AGENDA**

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In accordance with the Town of Hilton Head Island Municipal Code Section 2-5-15, this meeting is being conducted virtually and can be viewed live on the Town's Public Meeting Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/townofhiltonheadislandmeetings/>. Following the meeting, the video record will be made available on the Town's website at <https://www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov/>.

**1. Call to Order**

**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**

**4. Approval of Agenda**

**5. Approval of Minutes**

a. March 1, 2021

**6. Citizen Comments**

**7. Discussion Items**

a. Update on status of Top Priority Gullah Geechee Cultural Project Recommendations

**8. Adjournment**

Public comments concerning agenda items can be submitted electronically via the Open Town Hall HHI portal at <https://hiltonheadislandsc.gov/opentownhall/>. The portal will close at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, April 2, 2021. All comments submitted through the portal will be provided to the Task Force for review and made part of the official record. Citizens who wish to comment on agenda items during the meeting by phone must contact the Task Force Secretary at 843-341-4691 no later than 12 noon. on Friday, April 2, 2021.

***Please note that a quorum of Town Council may result if four (4) or more of their members attend this meeting.***

***Please note that a quorum of the Planning Commission may result if five (5) or more of their members attend this meeting.***



The Town of Hilton Head Island  
**Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural  
Preservation Task Force  
Meeting Minutes**

**March 1, 2021, 9:00 a.m.**

VIRTUAL VIA BLUEJEANS

**Present from the Task Force:** Lavon Stevens, Chairman (Chairman Stevens joined the meeting at 9:28 a.m.); Ibrahim Abdul-Malik; Martha Davis; Palmer Simmons; Caroline McVitty; Teresa White (Ms. White joined the meeting at 9:57 a.m.)

**Absent from the Task Force:** Todd Theodore, Shani Green, Joyce Wright

**Present from Town Council:** Alex Brown, Tamara Becker, Tom Lennox, David Ames

**Others Present:** None

**Present from Town Staff:** Sheryse DuBose, Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator; Jennifer Ray; Interim Community Development Director; Teri Lewis, Deputy Community Development Director; Diane Busch, Staff Attorney; Cindaia Ervin, Finance Assistant; Vicki Pfannenschmidt, Temporary Administrative Assistant

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Palmer Simmons called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.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** – See as noted above.

**4. Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Simmons asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Abdul-Malik moved to approve. Ms. McVitty seconded. By way of roll call, the motion passed by a vote of 5-0-0. (Ms. White was not yet at the meeting.)

**5. Approval of Minutes**

**a. February 1, 2021**

Mr. Simmons asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2021 regular meeting. Ms. McVitty moved to approve. Mr. Abdul-Malik seconded. By way of roll call, the motion passed by a vote of 5-0-0. (Ms. White was not yet at the meeting.)

**6. Citizen Comments**

Public comments concerning agenda items were to be submitted electronically via the Town's Open Town Hall portal. The portal closed at Noon, Friday, February 26, 2021, prior to the scheduled meeting. Comments made by the public were provided to the Task

Force and made a part of the official record.

Citizens were provided the option to sign up for public comment participation by phone during the meeting. The public comment period closed at Noon on Friday, February 26, 2021, prior to the scheduled meeting. There was one request to phone in with public comment regarding Item 7.a.

## **7. Discussion Items**

### **a. Review Progress and Next Steps for Historic Neighborhoods Overlay District LMO Amendments**

Dr. DuBose updated the Task Force members on the progress to date. She stated that on Thursday, February 25, 2021 the Public Planning Committee met and voted to make a recommendation to move the Family Compound and Family Subdivision LMO Amendments on to Town Council for the first reading on March 16, 2021. Dr. DuBose stated that it was understandable the Task Force was disappointed all proposed amendments did not move forward, but assured the Task Force members they would be provided updates as the amendments move forward. She added that once these amendments pass final reading, landowners will be able to make application immediately. She encouraged Task Force members to reach out to residents to access and complete the survey on the Open Town Hall Portal explaining the input would assist in prioritizing the other amendments and moving them forward.

Mr. Simmons asked for Public Comment. Mr. Phil Smith, President of Oak Marsh Property Owners Association. On behalf of the Association, he spoke in support of the Task Force and their task at hand to preserve Gullah Heritage.

Chairman Stevens joined the meeting at 9:28 a.m. explaining he had technical difficulties. At that time he proceeded with the duties of chairing the meeting.

The Task Force made comments and inquiries regarding: density issues; home occupation; buffers and setbacks; the purpose of the survey; location, access and function of the survey; alternatives for citizens to take the survey; survey content and rationale; outreach efforts; the process of moving forward; and the line of communication between staff and the Task Force.

### **b. Case Studies**

Dr. DuBose updated the Task Force members on the progress to date. She explained that case studies consist of closely observing specific challenges. She noted the challenges that are being observed are those that Native Islanders face when using the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) as it is currently written. Dr. DuBose said specific case studies will be supplied to the Task Force using a format to protect the anonymity of the individuals. She stated the format for the case studies will begin with the context or introduction which will be the historical communities of Hilton Head Island and, more specifically, Native Island property owners; challenges; solutions; benefits; and concluding with results. She reviewed five case studies and possible solutions. She added that staff will continue to keep the cases updated and in turn, update the Task Force. She encouraged the Task Force to assist in identifying cases that may need reviewed and staff will continue to update the list.

The Task Force made comments and inquiries regarding: the scope of the case studies; the Historic Neighborhoods Overlay District meeting the needs and resolving the issues of the property owners; the time frame for the case studies; staff insight regarding the LMO; multiple issues within a single case; and clarification of requirements for easements and right of ways.

**c. Identification of Heirs Property**

Dr. DuBose updated the Task Force members on the progress to date. She stated the Task Force will receive a list of Gullah owned properties as of 2020. She asked that the Task Force members review the list for the purpose of updating. Dr. DuBose asked that they submit the updated list in time for review at the April 5 meeting.

The Task Force made comments and inquiries regarding: the size of the list; suggestion that staff remove those parcels that are definitely not heirs property; and the Heritage Library program on genealogy that relates to heirs property.

**d. Property Taxes**

Dr. DuBose updated the Task Force members on the progress to date. She stated taxes were due on January 15 with an extended deadline to March 31 before any penalty would be applied. She said the list will be reviewed after that date. Dr. DuBose reported that Penn Center is conducting a delinquent tax program to assist those who are having difficulties paying the taxes and the link was sent to members of the Task Force. She noted the deadline for the program is today. She added that there is only one property from 2020 needs to be redeemed before the October deadline.

Ms. White reported that of the three properties noted as delinquent last month, two have been completed and the third is in the process of being completed. She reviewed detail regarding funds spent by the Pan-African Family Employment Network on properties on Hilton Head Island for property taxes for 2019-2020 and on redemptions for 2019-2020. She stated it is the largest property redemption that has been done in the history of the organization. She said she would forward the list to the Task Force members and staff.

**e. Revised 2021 Meeting Schedule**

Ms. McVitty moved to approve. Mr. Simmons seconded. By way of roll call, the motion passed by a vote of 5-0-0. (Ms. White had left the meeting.)

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

**Submitted by:** Vicki Pfannenschmidt, Secretary

**Approved:** [DATE]

## Status for Gullah Geechee Top Priority Recommendations

	Recommendations	Strategies	Resources			Status		
			Departments/Organizations	Funding Sources	Funding Amount	Date Started	Scope of Work	Percentage Completed
1	<b>PP-4</b> Designate Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District	In establishing a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District, the listed departments will work to reassess zoning, buffers, setbacks, etc. within the identified boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Development Department (Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator – Project Lead)</li> <li>Public Projects and Facilities Department</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	1/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drafted LMO Amendments</li> <li>Letters sent and signs posted</li> <li>Q&amp;A website established</li> <li>Correspondence with public</li> <li>Reviewed with Gullah Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission including Public Hearing, and Public Planning Committee in multiple meeting</li> <li>Recommended for approval by Task Force, LMO Committee &amp; Planning Commission</li> </ul>	75%
2	<b>PP-6</b> Provide greater flexibility for ROWs and drainage easements	This project is a part of PP-4. Currently underway as a part of the Dirt Road Paving program, requirements are in the process of being amended to maintain current lot density with the placement of additional homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Development Department (Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator – Project Lead)</li> <li>Public Projects and Facilities Department</li> <li>Fire Rescue Department</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	1/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drafted LMO Amendments</li> <li>Letters sent and signs posted</li> <li>Q&amp;A website established</li> <li>Correspondence with public</li> <li>Reviewed with Gullah Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission including Public Hearing, and Public Planning Committee in multiple meetings</li> <li>Recommended for approval by Task Force, LMO Committee &amp; Planning Commission</li> </ul>	75%
3	<b>PP-2</b> “Fast Track” Development Review Process	This project is a part of PP-4. To alleviate the financial hardship of a lengthy waiting period, upon completion of development review, properties within the established Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District will be processed first.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Development Department (Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator – Project Lead)</li> <li>Public Projects and Facilities Department</li> <li>Palmetto Electric</li> <li>Water and Sewer</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	1/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drafted LMO Amendments</li> <li>Letters sent and signs posted</li> <li>Q&amp;A website established</li> <li>Correspondence with public</li> <li>Reviewed with Gullah Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission including Public Hearing, and Public Planning Committee in multiple meetings</li> <li>Recommended for approval by Task Force, LMO Committee &amp; Planning Commission</li> </ul>	75%
4	<b>PP-5</b> Add Family Compound Provisions to Land Management Ordinance	Implementation for this project will work in conjunction of PP-4 in terms of establishing Family Compounds, along with requirements within the identified Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Development Department (Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator – Project Lead)</li> <li>Public Projects and Facilities Department</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	1/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drafted LMO Amendments</li> <li>Letters sent and signs posted</li> <li>Q&amp;A website established</li> <li>Correspondence with public</li> <li>Reviewed with Gullah Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission including Public Hearing, and Public Planning Committee in multiple meetings</li> <li>Recommended for approval by Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission, and Public Planning Committee</li> </ul>	75%

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			Departments/Organizations	Funding Sources	Funding Amount	Date Started	Scope of Work	Percent Completed
5	<b>CP-17</b> Recognize Gullah Churches to be Source of Leadership and Communication	Outreach with Gullah churches will be conducted to gather information, assess needs, and disseminate information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>Church Leadership</li> <li>Church Parishioners</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	4/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide updates via email regarding Gullah Geechee affairs</li> <li>Prepared introduction letter regarding availability of Historic Neighborhood Preservation Administrator for assistance</li> </ul>	Ongoing
6	<b>CP-14</b> Establish Open-Air Market for Gullah Products	The identified organizations will work together to establish an open air market that will work to promote Gullah Culture and create economic development opportunities for participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA)</li> <li>Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA)</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	4/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathering Input from Local Venders</li> </ul>	10%
7	<b>CP-7</b> Program to educate Town officials, teachers, and others on Gullah history and culture	A historical and cultural training module will be developed for new hires and newly elected positions for the Town of Hilton Head Island. This program will also work towards the appeal to include Gullah Geechee history and culture in the South Carolina state standards for social studies K-12 school curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>Town of Hilton Head Human Resources</li> <li>Gullah Museum</li> <li>Penn Center</li> <li>Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park</li> <li>Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission</li> <li>Hilton Head Island Historians</li> <li>Office of Cultural Affairs</li> <li>South Carolina State Department of Education</li> <li>Other education resources</li> </ul>	Town of Hilton Head Island	+/- \$600	2/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record Resilience in Vulnerable Communities: The Preservation of Gullah Geechee Communities in Hilton Head, South Carolina for new Town staff.</li> </ul>	20%
8	<b>HP-4</b> NIBCAA to work with the Community Foundation of the Low Country (CFL) to create a fund to clear property titles.	The identified departments and organizations will work together to organize fund-raising efforts purposed to clear property titles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>NIBCAA</li> <li>CFL</li> </ul>	Local Donors Grants	+/- \$5000		Not Started	

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			Departments/Organizations	Funding Sources	Funding Amount	Date Started	Scope of Work	Percent Completed
9	<b>HP-2</b> Leverage local, state, and national organizations to address Heirs' Property	Contact will be established to maintain awareness of information and programs that are related to Heirs' Property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>Pan African Family Empowerment and Land Preservation Network (PAFEN)</li> <li>South Carolina Legal Services (SCLS)</li> <li>Heirs' Property Retention Coalition (HPRC)</li> <li>South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center (SCALJC)</li> <li>Black Family Land Trust (BFLT)</li> <li>Black Belt Justice Center (BBJC)</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A		Not Started	
10	<b>PP-14</b> Program for temporary or seasonal signs to promote economic opportunities for Gullah businesses and residents	Temporary or seasonal signs that are compliant with the Town LMO will be established and distributed upon request to Gullah businesses and residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>NIBCAA</li> <li>OCA</li> </ul>	Town of Hilton Head Island	TBD based on sign cost and the number of signs needed.	4/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial design and cost estimate</li> </ul>	10%
11	<b>HP-1</b> Utilize Heritage Library as a first step to clear land title	This project will be implemented in conjunction with CP-1. The identified departments and organizations will work together to research strategies to clear land titles for Heirs' Property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>Heritage Library</li> <li>Additional resources related to clearing land titles</li> </ul>	Heritage Library Charitable Foundations	TBD based on the number of people who need service	9/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Held initial meetings regarding the creation of a genealogy clinic to aid in clearing property titles</li> </ul>	50%
12	<b>PP-12</b> Program to Educate Gullah Residents on Policy – Taxes, Land Use, Development	Meetings and workshops will be held with the identified departments and organizations to provide education on different issues that impact Gullah residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town of Hilton Head Island Staff (Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator – Project Lead)</li> <li>Beaufort County</li> </ul>	Town of Hilton Head Island	+/- \$1000	2/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with The Links, Inc. to promote education from the Center from Heirs' Property Preservation on Heirs' Property, Forestry, and Wills</li> </ul>	Ongoing

## Status for Gullah Geechee Top Priority Recommendations

	Recommendations	Strategies	Resources			Status		
			Departments/Organizations	Funding Sources	Funding Amount	Date Started	Scope of Work	Percent Completed
13	<b>HP-3</b> Encourage Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (CHPP) to Open Satellite Office	This project will be implemented in two parts. Part 1 - Information and assistance will be provided to land owners with Heirs' Property that meet the income requirements.  Part 2 – Creation of a local Heirs' Property resource center that benefits citizens of all income levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Development Department (Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator – Project Lead)</li> <li>Staff Attorney/Town Attorney</li> <li>CHPP</li> <li>Outside Legal Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CFL</li> <li>Charitable Foundations</li> <li>Grants</li> </ul>	TBD based on staff and facility needs	5/2020	Conversation with Center for Heirs' Property Preservation	10%
14	<b>CP-1</b> Promote Heritage Library to research history and genealogy	This project will be implemented in conjunction with HP-1. The identified departments and organizations will work together to research strategies to clear land titles for Heirs' Property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>Heritage Library</li> <li>Additional resources related to history and genealogy research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage Library</li> <li>Charitable Foundations</li> </ul>	TBD based on whether costs can be mitigated	9/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Held initial meetings regarding the creation of a genealogy clinic to aid in clearing property titles</li> <li>Working with community members to identify Heirs Property</li> </ul>	50%
15	<b>PP-11</b> Fund for Delinquent Taxes	The identified departments and organizations will work together to organize fund-raising efforts purposed to assist land owners who are delinquent and unable to pay their property taxes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator</li> <li>NIBCAA</li> <li>Beaufort County Tax Office</li> <li>CFL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charitable Foundations</li> <li>Grants</li> <li>Local Donors</li> </ul>	+/- \$1000	2/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepared press release for Penn Center's Land Preservation Assistance Program to aid Beaufort County property owners</li> </ul>	25%
16	<b>PP-3</b> HNPA to work with Gullah property and business owners to assist with Town Regulations	"Walk ins" are currently being assisted by the named departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Development Department (Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator – Project Lead)</li> <li>Public Projects and Facilities Department</li> <li>Fire Rescue Department</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	6/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> <li>Prepare case studies related to assistance requested</li> </ul>	Ongoing