



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: April 5, 2021