

Affordable Housing Committee Meeting

Theodore D. Washington Municipal Building, Henry “Emmett” McCracken Jr. Council Chambers, 20
Bridge Street, Bluffton, SC

November 07, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hamilton at 10:00 am.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Chair Fred Hamilton

Council Member Emily Burden

Committee Member Gwen Chambers

Committee Member Meg James

Committee Member Denolis Polite - 10:04 am

Committee Member Grace Staples

Committee Member Doug Magill

III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. September 5, 2024

A motion was made by Committee Member Magill to approve September 5, 2024, minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee member Chambers.

Voting Yea: Chair Hamilton, Council Member Burden, Committee Member James, Committee Member Polite, Committee Member Staples

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Henz, Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce & Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust Fund

Heather Rath, Lowcountry Habitat for Humanity

James Williams, Beaufort Jasper Economic Opportunities Commission, Executive Director

V. OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. FY2025 Neighborhood Assistance Program Budget Update

The budget for the Neighborhood Assistance Program for FY 2025 has been approved at \$400,000 by Town Council. An additional \$144,000 was added to the budget by a grant awarded to the program by Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust on August 22. That brings the 2025 fiscal year budget to \$544,000.

Nineteen homes have received home repairs at a total of \$115,991.53.

Six homes have been serviced for septic pump outs or plumbing services at a total of \$3,224.

One home has been serviced for tree service at a total of \$200.00

Five homes are currently being serviced for repairs and/or waiting on estimates to be submitted. Three homes will be visited by Town Building Safety to inspect home repair requests in the next week.

On Saturday, October 12, 2024, the Bluffton Township Fire District hosted a smoke alarm blitz in the Brendan Woods Community. Staff Smalls represented the AHC. One hundred & fourteen, 10-year smoke alarms were placed in 33 homes. This was a successful event, all organizations involved are looking forward to working together again.

Committee member Chambers asked if another blitz would happen again, Smalls answered yes but no date has been set. Smalls said that the next community would more than likely be the habitat community on Simmonsville.

Smalls let the committee know that staff has been talking about making a recommendation to the to increase the allotted funds per home. Since more older homes are now requesting repair services, with older homes there is more work that needs to be taken care of. Right now, staff has not set a dollar amount and the recommendation will come to the committee for discussion.

Committee member Staples asked what is considered a bigger job, Smalls reiterated that the older the home the more maintenance and repairs the home requires.

Smalls let the committee know that we have not had any calls for septic jobs in the past three months, but we have picked up minor plumbing jobs.

Committee member Magill asked if the program covers extermination. Smalls answered that we do not but if extermination needs to be done before we can start any repairs the homeowner is referred to Bluffton Self Help to help pay the cost.

2. Adoption of 2025 Affordable Housing Meeting Dates

A motion was made by Committee Member Magill, to accept the 2025 Affordable Housing Committee meeting dates. The motion was seconded by Council Member Burden.

Voting Yea: Chair Hamilton, Committee Member Chambers, Committee Member James, Committee Member Polite, Committee Member Staples

VII. DISCUSSION

1. An update on The May Townhomes, Mark Maxwell, Special Projects Manager

The civil design is complete and is out for bid. The developer, State of Mind LLC, has reached out to a number of contractors but not much response has come back in. One response came in high, so the developer is now in negotiate to lower the bid. Once an agreement is made on the price the grading work can begin.

Committee member Magill asked what Mark thought the reason is for not getting many contractor responses. Mark answered that he was told that the amount of commercial construction is happening, no contractor is looking for work right now.

Committee member James asked what kind of contractor are we looking for. Mark replied we need a civil grading contractor.

2. Habitat for Humanity of the Lowcountry, Brenda Dooley, CEO

Habitat Humanity of the Lowcountry has recently gone through a merger combining both Beaufort County offices, north and south of the broad. One office now coordinates Beaufort & Jasper County. Since 1990 Habitat has supplied 181 homes. Habitat relies heavily on volunteers and donors. Thanks to Senator Davis, the State has given Habitat 2 million dollars to help with a project that will be in Hardeeville, a total of 161 acres for housing to be built. The Town of Hilton Head has set aside \$500,000 to purchase land and to build homes.

Brenda shared the process of a family obtaining a home and to be financially stable to maintain and keep their home.

Brenda mentioned that Habitat is starting to look at other ideas about housing other than your traditional homes. Such as duplexes and townhomes, they have started a minor repair program for their homeowners.

Brenda gave us an overview of the new community in Hardeeville, Hardeeville donated the land and Forino Developers built ten townhomes and sold the units to Habitat for Humanity and Habitat will then sell the units to qualified families. These homes will be closed before the Thanksgiving holiday.

Brenda said that Habitat is ready to start building again in the Bluffton area as soon as land is secured. Families can also build on their own land, habitat also builds cottages, small one- or two-bedroom homes.

Committee member Chambers said that she sees several ways that the Town can partner with Habitat through homebuying workshops, home maintenance workshops and budgeting workshops.

Committee member Burden asked how come Habitat hasn't built any homes in Bluffton in 12 years. Brenda answered that 32 acres of land was donated in Hilton Head and that they just completed working in the Hilton Head area building 32 homes during those 12 years.

James Williams, Executive Director of Beaufort Jasper Economic Opportunity

Gave an overview of the BJEOP program, far as their funding source, who they service and what services they provide.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47am.