

Affordable Housing Committee Meeting

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

July 10, 2025

This meeting can be viewed live on [BCTV](#), on Sparklight Channel 9 and 113 or on Spectrum Channel 1304.

I. CALL TO ORDER

July 10, 2025, the Affordable Housing Committee Meeting was called to order at 10:02 am.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Chairman Fred Hamilton
Council Member Emily Burden
Committee Member Gwen Chambers
Committee Member Meg James
Committee Member Doug Magill
Committee Member Veronica Navarro

ABSENT

Committee Member Denolis Polite

III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. June 5, 2025

A motion was made by Commissioner Chambers, Seconded by Commissioner Magill.

Voting Yea: Chairman Hamilton, Councilwoman Burden, Commissioner James, Commissioner Navarro.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Alex Navarro - Town resident and business owner/residential contractor

Mr. Navarro asked how contractors, small builders and the community in general can learn more about the committee's work.

V. OLD BUSINESS

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Fiscal Year 2025 ended on June 30, 2025. For the new year, the Neighborhood Assistance Program was able to assist 42 families with the Town's Safe and Dry Program:

- 31 homes received services for minor home repairs
- One home was demolished for safety issues
- One home received property cleanup assistance
- Seven homes received septic service
- Two homes received tree service

Staff started processing new applications for FY2026 on Monday July 7, 2025. Currently, seven homes are waiting for estimate submittals.

Staff is working on two projects for the fiscal year with Save the Shutters.

VII. DISCUSSION

1. Goals for FY2026

Takeaways from Savannah Housing Tour Sponsored by Community Housing Services Agency (CHSA)

- **Innovative Approaches:** Savannah is experimenting with multiple housing solutions (nonprofit partnerships, modular homes, veterans' housing, homeless projects, etc.).
- **Modular Housing:** Looked identical to traditional homes but wasn't cost-effective in small numbers; scaling up could reduce costs.
- **Partnership Model:** Nonprofits (like CHSA) partner with the city, banks, and federal programs (CDFI) to fund and manage housing projects.
- **Creative Use of Land & Eminent Domain:** City reclaimed blighted/heirs' properties, cleaned titles, and redeveloped them for families.
- **Dedicated Staff:** Having a passionate, resourceful leader was key to coordinating programs and partnerships.
- **Spectrum of Needs:** Efforts target veterans, homeless, and affordable homeownership broadly.

Discussion Points for Bluffton Affordable Housing Development

- **Community Land Trust:** Idea to create a Bluffton Land Trust to retain land ownership while partnering with developers to build affordable units.
- **Builder Incentives:** Offer tax breaks or reduced infrastructure costs to encourage developers to participate.
- **Resale & Deed Restrictions:** Limit homeowner and developer profit to maintain affordability; consider extending affordability beyond 30 years.
- **Leasing Land Model:** Suggested leasing town-owned land long-term to reduce costs for buyers (separating land from home ownership).
- **Dedicated Department:** A housing department could coordinate nonprofits, developers, banks, and community partners.
- **Existing Town Efforts:** Bluffton already incentivizes developers, contributes land, and has approved projects like 1095 May River Road and Beaufort Memorial Hospital's 120 affordable units. However, partnerships with private developers remain limited.

Challenges Identified

- Limited available land within areas governed by development agreements.
- Attracting private developers willing to accept lower profits.
- Communicating opportunities to local landowners who may not know about incentives.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

To have adequate time to discuss the committee's ideas and thoughts a workshop was scheduled for Wednesday July 30th from 1 to 3pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:57am.

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday, August 7, 2025

APPROVED