

0001

1

2

3 GULLAH-GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

4 PUBLIC HEARING - BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

5 PINELAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

6 August 5, 2009

7 *****

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

REPORTED BY: MARY ANN RIDENOUR, RPR, CLR

20 Registered Professional Reporter,

Certified LiveNote Reporter

21 and Notary Public

22

23

24

25

0002

1 (The proceeding commenced at 7:20 P.M.)

2 COMMISSIONER COHEN: Good evening, everybody.

3 I'm Louise Miller Cohen. Of course, I'm one of the 25

4 commissioners and I'm the commissioner, one of the

5 commissioners for the State of South Carolina. I would

6 like to welcome all of you here this evening to your

7 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor public input

8 meeting. Okay, so welcome.

9 And I'm going to ask if Pastor Taylor would please

10 come and give us the invocation.

11 (Invocation.)

12 PASTOR TAYLOR: Also, while I'm standing

13 here, also on behalf of the office of members and

14 friends of Bethel Baptist Church, I'd like to welcome

15 you here. And we want you to feel comfortable as

16 possible and want you to know for those, whether or not

17 be here before, the rest rooms are -- rest rooms are

18 over here. And also rest room down through the doors,

19 here all the way down at the bottom. The first

20 bathroom on the right-hand side is the women's bathroom
21 and the second door on the right is the men's bathroom.
22 Also, if you need a drink of water, we have some water
23 fountains down there also.

24 So, once again, we're so grateful that you thought
25 about us hosting the meeting here. And, once again, we
0003

1 welcome and God bless you.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you so much.

3 COMMISSIONER COHEN: Thank you, Pastor
4 Taylor.

5 Like I mentioned before, I'm one of the 25
6 commissioners. So, again, I'm Louise Miller Cohen.
7 And, of course, for the State of South Carolina. I
8 would also like to introduce Commissioner Emory
9 Campbell, who is also the chair of the Commission. I
10 would also like to introduce Ms. Zelda Grant, assistant
11 to Michael Allen, who is the coordinator for the, for
12 the, for the corridor commissioners, and also Andrea
13 Barber is a summer intern who is also working with
14 Mr. Allen.

15 And I also would like to recognize the mayor of
16 Hardeeville, South Carolina. Mayor --

17 DR. BOSTICK: No, I'm not the mayor of
18 Hardeeville.

19 COMMISSIONER COHEN: You're not?

20 DR. BOSTICK: My name is Earl Bostick. I'm a
21 general dentist in Ridgeland.

22 COMMISSIONER COHEN: Oh, I'm sorry.

23 DR. BOSTICK: But that is my cousin,
24 somewhere down the line.

25 COMMISSIONER COHEN: Oh, your cousin. Tell
0004

1 him we missed him tonight. We got -- we got the teeth
2 man here tonight. Okay. So all right.

3 So, anyway, thank you so very much for being here,
4 Mr. Bostick.

5 Now I'm going to ask Commissioner Campbell if he
6 would please come forth.

7 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Good evening. It's
8 good to be -- it's good to be back in this area. I
9 haven't been in this area in about 20 years. Used to
10 work for Beaufort-Jasper Comprehensive Health, back in
11 the seventies. And Ms. Williams and I combed this
12 whole area. But there's lots of territory here. We're
13 glad to be here.

14 And I want to thank again Pastor Taylor for
15 hosting us in this beautiful church.

16 Want to also thank Mr. Gardner, James Gardner, for
17 coordinating the meetings in Jasper County. Last week
18 we were in Hardeeville.

19 You know, Jasper County, for the most part, most
20 people don't think they're Gullah in Jasper County.
21 We're here to tell you, you are. And it's because we
22 designate the Gullah Corridor anything from the, from
23 the ocean 30 miles inward. And somehow, as the crow
24 flies, all of Jasper County is in it. So whether you
25 consider yourself Gullah-Geechee people or not, we're
0005

1 here to hear your stories.

2 Now, what is the Gullah-Geechee Corridor? The
3 Gullah-Geechee Corridor. The Gullah-Geechee Cultural
4 Heritage Corridor extends from Wilmington, North
5 Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida, 30 miles from the
6 ocean inward. It is one of the nearly 50 heritage
7 areas in the country. And the purpose of heritage
8 areas is just what it says, to preserve and recognize
9 the heritage of various groups, some of it cultural,
10 some of it historic, some of it natural.

11 And so we're here to get input from you regarding
12 what are those things in the Gullah-Geechee culture
13 that you would like to see preserved in this area?
14 Historic sites related to Gullah-Geechee people,
15 African-American people, that we, that we term
16 Gullah-Geechee people. Those are the people who have
17 pretty much retained most of their African heritage.

18 Most of us who are Gullah-Geechee people like
19 rice. And they associate us with rice because we
20 developed most of the rice plantations during slavery.
21 And in Africa, it was the Rice Coast of Africa from
22 which many people were brought from.

23 And so, because of isolation along the coast of
24 South Carolina and Georgia and North Carolina and
25 Florida, we were able to retain many aspects of the
0006

1 African culture. And over the last 150 years nearly,
2 as free people, these areas have been isolated enough
3 for us to continue to practice our cultural, our
4 cultural, our cultural survival, you might say, such as
5 the food ways, such as worship way or worship
6 practices, such as our childrearing, such as our art
7 forms, baskets and net knitting, practices of gathering
8 food, the medicinal practices, and sites and ways of
9 doing things, is what we're looking for in terms of
10 input. Some of the input could be intangibles, like
11 stories and storytelling practices. Some of it could

12 be actual tangible things, like old rice fields and
13 cemeteries, trees that something significant might have
14 gone under -- gone on under an old oak tree. Anything
15 that you think that are very important to this area, we
16 would like for you to give an input, give your input
17 tonight. Any memories.

18 We're here up to nine o'clock. If you do
19 everything before nine, we'll all leave. But we'll
20 listen to you as long as you have time to talk.

21 Now, how this came about, a group of us thought
22 that, in the early to mid 1990s, that the Gullah
23 culture was important enough to be preserved, to be
24 captured, to be recorded for history, to be protected
25 so that we could continue to live certain ways, certain
0007

1 traditions. And so we called upon our congressman,
2 Mr. James Clyburn, of the Beaufort -- I mean out of
3 Charleston and part of Beaufort County. And he
4 commissioned a study to see what it is along that
5 corridor that I described that would be -- that people
6 would be interested in preserving. And that was called
7 a resource study. That was completed about 2002.

8 He took that study and took it to Congress and
9 introduced legislation for this Corridor Commission.
10 And they legislated -- they passed legislation for this
11 Commission in 2006. And so the first thing we did was
12 to organize the Commission.

13 And next thing was that we are to get input from
14 the public. And for the last several months, well, for
15 the last year, we have been holding public hearings
16 from Jacksonville to Wilmington, North Carolina, within
17 that stretch. This happens to be the last one. And we
18 didn't do it because we think you're unimportant. We
19 just took, you know, certain dates and got community
20 help. And this is where it falls.

21 So we're here tonight to an open mic, for you to
22 come and say your peace. And if there are any
23 questions that we can answer before you say your peace,
24 please, let me know. Otherwise, we're asking for your
25 input.

0008

1 Thank you. Not everybody at once.

2 PASTOR TAYLOR: I have a question here. The
3 terminology, Gullah and Geechee, explain the
4 terminology and what's the difference between the
5 Gullah and the Geechee? I have heard people say
6 Geechee. I never -- well, I hear that statement,
7 terminology, but never know anything about it until I

8 talked to -- Brother Gardner called, asking, a couple
9 weeks ago, asked him. So like to go into more depth,
10 detail how we come by the terminology and so the
11 difference between the two, the Gullah and Geechee.

12 And, matter of fact, I see we got, what, Florida,
13 Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. So the
14 Gullah -- what state consists of that? And Geechee,
15 what state consists of that, those? Those questions.

16 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Good question.

17 The lady just said, when you have a question, you
18 should come to the mic because they're recording and
19 they want to pick it up. Do you want to come and ask
20 the question to the mic?

21 PASTOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir. I have a soft
22 voice and they say in church I don't talk loud enough.

23 My concern is the terminology, Gullah and Geechee.
24 How did we arrive coming to the terminology? And also
25 here, the Gullah-Geechee, we see we have about four
0009

1 states. We have Florida, we have Georgia, South
2 Carolina and North Carolina. Who -- which state
3 considered to be the Gullah, which the Geechee there?
4 And, yes, right there, that's my question.

5 COMMISSIONER COHEN: Give us your name. Give
6 us your name.

7 PASTOR TAYLOR: Bernard Taylor, the pastor
8 here at Bethel.

9 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Were you born in this
10 area, Mr. Taylor?

11 PASTOR TAYLOR: Yes, about a mile and a half
12 to the right, called Tie Branch. Travel this direction
13 here, make a right turn, Tie Branch.

14 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: All right.

15 PASTOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir. And, also, our
16 church here was organized in 1864 here. Yes, just
17 information.

18 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: You're going to have
19 to come back to the mic after I answer this question
20 because I know you have some stories.

21 PASTOR TAYLOR: I've got a picture of our
22 first pastor.

23 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Great. Quite a bit
24 of history here.

25 I'm sorry I didn't explain Gullah-Geechee.
0010

1 Gullah-Geechee, for the purpose of this Corridor, and
2 for the purpose of this hearing tonight, are the same.
3 Gullah and Geechee means the same thing. So we

4 hyphenate it or slash it, Gullah-Geechee, because some
5 people refer to us as Gullahs, some people refer to us
6 as Geechees. And, yet, it's all the same definition:
7 We talk funny and like rice. But it's deeper than
8 that.

9 We think those terms derive from mispronunciation
10 of Gola for Gullah. We think Gullah got changed from
11 Gola to Gullah. And some folks connect Gullah with
12 Angola because that's part of Africa from which many
13 people came. But the Gullah tribe is surely one of the
14 tribes that were rice growing in West Africa. We think
15 that term might have gotten changed to Gullah. This
16 Commission is going to be doing more research, calling
17 on scholars to do more research in time to get definite
18 origins of those words.

19 Geechee, that term is also one that we're still
20 researching. But we're using the definition that
21 Geechee may have come from the term Kissi. That's one
22 suggestion. Kissi was a rice growing tribe in West
23 Africa. We think that might have gotten changed from
24 Kissi to Geechee. There's another theory that the
25 Ogeechee River in Georgia, where a lot of folks grew
0011

1 rice and a lot of folks lived, and as Gullah speakers
2 do sometimes, we drop the first syllable. And it might
3 have become Geechee instead of Ogeechee.

4 But that's the -- those are the -- those are the
5 working theories on those two terms.

6 Same people came to these shores from West Africa,
7 helped to develop most of the rice fields. And rice
8 was the first crop. We all know about cotton. But for
9 the first nearly 100 years of plantation life along
10 this coast, it was rice. And then cotton came.

11 Okay. All right. Open mic.

12 I might say that the reason why this Corridor is
13 so important is because that coastline is very now
14 active with development. And we have cemeteries in
15 some areas that are endangered. We have sacred spots
16 other than cemeteries that may be endangered. And so
17 those are the kind of items that we want to hear from
18 you that needs protection.

19 DR. BOSTICK: My name is Earl Bostick.

20 And we have kind of been adopted into this
21 Gullah-Geechee Corridor. We live right at probably the
22 30-mile border. Like you say, a lot of the areas
23 you're talking about, around Hardeeville and right on
24 the east of 95, are intense development, over in the
25 area where I am, which is right down 321, pretty much

0012

1 where we're at now, just a little further over.
2 As I think back, I'm trying to get a handle on
3 exactly what you're asking from us. And other than
4 churches and cemeteries, you know, those are the only
5 things that I can really think of. Any other -- you
6 know, because a lot of the things that I would consider
7 that were really -- like, Old Ritter Quarters used to
8 be down there, those things have already been engulfed.
9 They were on plantations. And folks bought out these
10 plantations and just made hunting lodges and things
11 like that. And all that's gone, already gone. I can't
12 think of anything else, other than churches and
13 cemeteries. Could you give me some idea of any --
14 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: What about family
15 land?

16 DR. BOSTICK: Family land, we've got a lot of
17 heirs' property in this county. We're dealing with
18 that right now, with the planning commission, and
19 trying to figure out how we're going to handle that.
20 That's a bugaboo. We don't know what to do with that.
21 If you've got some ideas on that, we could definitely
22 use some of that. But the problem with that is, is
23 that, you know, with the new development ordinances
24 that are going into place, it makes it hard for
25 families to build on heirs' property because it has to
0013

1 have a clear title. So those kind of issues. So we
2 are dealing with issues like that. So I'm kind of --
3 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: That's the kind of
4 issues that we'd like to help with.
5 DR. BOSTICK: Okay. Well, we can definitely
6 use some help with heirs' property.
7 Churches, cemeteries, other historical and
8 cultural things, can't really think of anything else.
9 Maybe old schools. I know the old elementary school I
10 went to, that's been gone. You know, developers bought
11 that and changed it to something else. So can you give
12 us some idea? Is there anything else, other than
13 those, some hints maybe what other counties or states
14 have been identifying? And we can kind of figure out
15 if we've got some of these same things here in Jasper
16 County.
17 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Uh-huh.
18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Could I ask, what about
19 people as a treasure?
20 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: You need to --
21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, I was asking him.

22 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Yes. I'll give you
23 an idea, stories, folktales, recipes, rice fields, old
24 rice fields on plantations, plantations, who, you know,
25 Gullah people may not even own, but there are memories
0014

1 there that you want to preserve. As they develop, you
2 can actually have input for them to preserve certain
3 things. Landings to the river where people still want
4 to go to fish, those public landings that get closed
5 off by development and wanted to be private that were
6 once public. Those are the things that, that helps to
7 preserve the culture. Anything you think of, that you
8 think that should still be going on, that may get
9 changed and you would not want it changed, just, just
10 thinking. And, like they say, think outside the box.

11 MS. PHILLIPS: So I'm Jean Phillips. And I'm
12 from Beaufort, native South Carolinian, but moved here
13 about ten years ago. And I'm really here just to learn
14 tonight and, and to get a better sense of what this
15 looks like, feels like. And I was interested in the
16 literature, that you talk about developing a management
17 plan that represents a departure from traditional
18 methods and outcomes, and would just love some
19 examples, again, to stimulate my thinking.

20 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: I'll repeat myself.
21 The conventional method of planning does not
22 usually include historic places that are
23 Gullah-related; do not always include the problems of
24 family land, where people live on the land together and
25 therefore traditionally they were able to get along on
0015

1 the land without having streets dedicated and
2 without -- and having higher density than usual,
3 without having a gated community around them. If you
4 want to see that done differently, we want to hear
5 about it. There are times when eminent domain comes
6 through because the highway's got to get wider so that
7 somebody could get to the beach. Will that destroy a
8 Gullah neighborhood or family land? That's how serious
9 we are about protecting the Gullah culture. And that's
10 what this legislation would help us do. We want to
11 form partnerships with planning boards and local
12 governments to recognize this culture as being
13 something very, very important to American history.
14 And so when I say think outside the box, I'm saying
15 don't think things as they are. Somebody once said,
16 Some people see things as they are and ask why; others
17 see things that never was and ask why not. That's what

18 it's about.

19 MS. PHILLIPS: Could I ask a follow-up? I
20 just want to -- so is it also about, like, a visitor
21 center or something to celebrate the culture,
22 performances, things like that? Or is it more about
23 conserving and, I don't know, out -- outreach?

24 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: I'm here to listen to
25 y'all, whatever you want, whatever you want. If that's
0016

1 something that you want, you should come up and say it.
2 We need a center, we need centers so that people can
3 come and learn about the culture. We need museums. We
4 need performance places so we can learn the stories.
5 We want to hear from you. It's wide open now. We want
6 your input and then we can react to it by saying, Huh,
7 we can't do that, not enough funding. But we want to
8 hear from you. Come on and say it. She just said
9 something.

10 MS. PHILLIPS: To close that thought, I would
11 be very supportive of a wide -- I embrace the vision of
12 a very wide, alternative, open, outside-of-the-box
13 approach.

14 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: I thought you wanted
15 to say something about a center.

16 MS. PHILLIPS: I thought I was finished.

17 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: I thought you'd like
18 to see a center.

19 MS. PHILLIPS: Yes, I would love to see a
20 center.

21 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Go ahead. You can go
22 up more than once. As thoughts come to you, please
23 feel free to get up.

24 DR. BOSTICK: She brought up a very good
25 point concerning a center. I actually -- we have a lot
0017

1 of -- and we're talking tourism, things like that,
2 coming through, I guess more so Jasper County than
3 Beaufort County. So why not have something near the
4 interstate, to share our culture with people that are
5 passing through? Maybe in Ridgeland or something like
6 that, you know. And let the folks come from Beaufort
7 to, to, to demonstrate the culture and things like
8 that, and provide that for tourism, people that are
9 coming through, through our area. And that would be,
10 like, a focal point. We are right on 95. And Beaufort
11 is, you know, a little more on the water. So I think
12 something like that would, would benefit Jasper County.
13 It would benefit tourism in the state. And I think

14 everybody would benefit from this. And I think we can
15 learn something from -- our local people could learn
16 something, too. Because I don't know a whole lot about
17 the Gullah culture.

18 SENATOR PINCKNEY: Good evening,
19 Mr. Chairman. Good to see you, as always.

20 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Thank you, sir.
21 Thank you for coming.

22 SENATOR PINCKNEY: Thank you. Glad to be
23 here. I'm sure a lot of things have been said. I'm
24 Clementa Pinckney. Good to see everybody today.

25 I think that our culture is rich and multifaceted.

0018

1 And many of us are children and grandchildren and
2 great-great-grandchildren of the Gullah culture. I
3 think it could encompass many things.

4 One, I agree with what was said about a center,
5 where we could have a mixture of, you know, talking
6 about culture and history, but also a place for, for
7 economic activity, for people who are making baskets,
8 food, et cetera.

9 I think maybe we could look at a couple of
10 concepts that other local cultures around the world and
11 the country have used. For example, take Hawaii for
12 example. There are very few native Hawaiians left.
13 But what they have is a -- they have several sites that
14 have been preserved and have been taken back to the --
15 to an older village or it may be something that is
16 representation of an old Hawaiian village. They have
17 the Hawaiian cultural centers. Then, of course,
18 everybody goes to Hawaii, they see the luau and these
19 kinds of things. I think something like that could be
20 put forth.

21 Dr. Bostick mentioned the fact that, I mean, we
22 have 30-plus miles of 95. So -- and, you know, we
23 could serve almost as a gateway for the Gullah culture
24 in South Carolina and even heading into Savannah.
25 There are plenty of people right now who have family

0019

1 reunions in our area. So it could be -- it could be
2 Gullah tours. But, but off of 95, in our county, could
3 be sort of the jump-off point, I guess, is what --
4 probably somebody else has probably said that, with
5 facilities where we can say here are sites in Colleton,
6 here are sites in Beaufort, here are sites in Savannah,
7 here are sites in Jasper, here are some things in
8 Hampton. And, you know, because we're right on 95, we
9 can really be a central piece of what's happening.

10 And then, once you tie in, which is important, the
11 school aspect, how do we make sure that, that our kids
12 and -- are not only learning about world history and
13 about different parts of South Carolina history, but
14 how do we make sure that our history is being cherished
15 and respected, even here locally? And I think all of
16 that could be tied into it.

17 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Fantastic. That's
18 what we want to hear. That's what we want to hear.
19 Don't be bashful.

20 MR. PINCKNEY: Good evening. My name is
21 Herbert Pinckney. And I'm just thinking back, when I
22 was a kid roaming around Jasper County, that there are
23 many roads that just went through the woods, from one
24 highway to the, to the next. You could freely traverse
25 those roads without any problem. Then I go away for
0020

1 40-some years, I come back, and there are all gates or
2 chains across those roads. You can no longer traverse
3 those roads. And that shows you all of the changes
4 that have taken place. So I can understand the
5 Commission wanted to preserve the culture of the area.
6 Because when one loses their culture, they're lost.

7 And also I think that it is important that we give
8 the information relative to heirs' property, so that we
9 can educate the people about what's, what's involved
10 and what's going on. Because if you don't know, many
11 people are losing their land because the lack of
12 education, the lack of knowledge. So I think it's
13 important that if we could concentrate on helping
14 people that are heirs' property owners and educate
15 them, that perhaps we could avoid some of the things
16 that are now going on in this county. Thank you.

17 SENATOR PINCKNEY: If I could, Mr. Pinckney
18 kind of sparked something in me. He talked about roads
19 to the woods.

20 Clementa Pinckney.

21 He kind of talked about roads through the woods.
22 And I thought about the fact that a lot of our history
23 and culture is now really tied into the woods and into
24 buildings like this, our churches. Many of our
25 churches have been rebuilt. But we have cemeteries
0021

1 that have been here, as we like to say, since Jesus
2 left. And those cemeteries hold a lot of history.
3 There are time lines, the generations. They are hidden
4 history.

5 And you talked about land being lost. But I know

6 this happened a lot in Beaufort and Charleston. When
7 development comes in, halfway through the development,
8 there's a cemetery found. And then you know what
9 happens. If, if -- maybe there could be some
10 discussion or some focus on, how do we preserve our
11 last resting places? How do we maintain them?

12 Right out of Hollywood right now, the county --
13 South Carolina Hollywood, there is -- there's an old
14 cemetery that the county would like to encroach upon,
15 to build a huge waste facility. And so how do we --
16 you know, is there a way to, to not only do the
17 economic development piece, not only do the historical
18 preservation, but to look at ways to maintain culture
19 in a way so that we're not losing those, those very
20 sensitive places that really over time get grown up?

21 Those roads through the woods get bought by
22 somebody else. So you might have a one-acre plot out
23 in the woods that no one has looked over in many years,
24 but it's an old family plot. It may have been a brush
25 arbor church, where people worshiped. And it has just
0022

1 been left, for a variety of reasons. Or it could be an
2 old cemetery on an old plantation, right by the water,
3 that hasn't been valuable until -- up until -- hasn't
4 been -- hasn't been seen as valuable until recently.
5 So...

6 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Wonderful.

7 DR. BOSTICK: Let me ask one more question.

8 Senator Pinckney talked about cemeteries. And I was
9 thinking about the cemetery where my grandmother is
10 buried. And the gate's usually locked. But on
11 Mother's Day and -- I think it's Mother's Day. It's a
12 couple of times during the year when they'll open the
13 gate and you can go in there and visit the graves. And
14 I'm on the planning commission, so I know people always
15 say, Well, it's my land and I should be able to do what
16 I want to do with it. We get that a lot. So how do
17 you address issues like that, you know? How can you
18 address issues where this cemetery is on somebody's
19 plantation, and he owns the land? I mean, do you have
20 any rights at all or would this put any teeth into,
21 into those kinds of issues, where people can go visit
22 their, their loved ones' graves when they are ready? I
23 mean, I don't know the laws pertaining to this. And
24 maybe you might have some idea, since we're talking
25 about cemeteries.

0023

1 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: The legislation that

2 was passed by Congress calls for us to get input from
3 the public, to substantiate what the resource study had
4 found, that there were problems like this, that the
5 culture was threatened and there were items that the
6 Gullah people wanted to preserve. We now are getting
7 input so that we can develop what we call a management
8 plan for the preservation of the Gullah-Geechee
9 culture. That management plan would, excuse me,
10 include ordinances that we hope we can develop by
11 partnering with planning boards and local governments,
12 developers, private landowners, wherever we could
13 negotiate partners, partnerships, to address the very
14 kind of issue that you just described. And so what we
15 want is your problems. What do you think are
16 threatening the general preservation of the Gullah
17 culture? And that is a very important item. We have
18 the same kind of problems where I grew up on Hilton
19 Head. Places you could go, cemeteries you could freely
20 visit, and it has been a struggle for individual
21 families to confront developers with that. This would
22 give us some much more broader support, as well as give
23 us the opportunity to form these partnerships to
24 educate planners, to educate local boards, and the
25 importance of American history and the culture being
0024

1 such an integral part of it. So let us hear.

2 MS. WILLIAMSON: Good evening. I'm Daisy
3 Williamson. I grew up in this area.

4 But I have a little pet peeve in this area: The
5 Robertville school, which was closed back in the -- I
6 think it was in the mid sixties. Because my children
7 got caught up in that. And a few of us worked very
8 hard to preserve that building. And now we have it as
9 a Head Start senior citizens building.

10 And that community center is something I would
11 like to see preserved with something because it is on
12 the northern part of Jasper County. And I went to
13 school there, but not in that building. Because my
14 senior year, I was transported to Jasper. But my
15 children came up in that school. And I would like to
16 see that as a central point of interest for us to
17 preserve because that property was given by, I think,
18 Deke Shefter (ph), a black man, for that school to be
19 built. But it come to a period now, it's owned by the
20 county. So that was an interest of mine.

21 Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: I know some people
23 came in late, so I want to repeat myself. What, what

24 we're here to do is to listen to you regarding items
25 that you would like to see preserved in this area,
0025

1 which might include old rice fields, might include a
2 nice oak tree that the highway department might decide
3 to put a road through, that you once used for telling
4 stories or for, you know, gathering and having picnics,
5 and sacred to you because it's a part of the history of
6 your life, as well as your neighborhood. Any other
7 things, like recipes that you would like to see
8 preserved. Because you may have the Robertville Center
9 decide to do oral histories, and so you may need, in
10 the future, some assistance with some small grants to
11 get that done. Any projects that you think are related
12 to the culture and the history of the culture, that you
13 can foresee, let us hear, please. We have another hour
14 to think.

15 MR. GARDNER: Well, I was trying not to say
16 anything. My name is James Gardner. I guess I have
17 been talking for the last ten years, so I was trying to
18 be quiet. But I've done a lot of research on the old
19 rice fields. We still have a number of them in Jasper
20 County, in particular at the Turnbridge Plantation,
21 which was also growing Carolina gold, which was very
22 important as to the African-American -- this community.
23 Matter of fact, I wrote a book on that and I have got a
24 lot of the recipes.

25 But this December, I'll be celebrating 23 years of
0026

1 marriage. And the first year we got married, the next
2 year we started celebrating with my wife's family and
3 my family, we have a Christmas celebration. And my
4 mother and my father-in-law, they always, every
5 Christmas, after we get through, they always have this
6 discussion, When I was a boy and when I was a girl.
7 They started that 23 years ago, when they were in their
8 fifties. Now they're in their seventies. Well, they
9 have stories of their grandparents. And my
10 father-in-law is 73, my mother is 74. My mother, she
11 was raised by her grandmother. So she has stories
12 going back at least 150 years old or 200 years old. So
13 those stories, when we started out 23 years ago, you
14 know, I'm saying, you know, I'm kind of tired of
15 hearing these when-I-was-a-boy, when-I-was-a-girl
16 stories.

17 Now my daughter is 15, so those stories are very
18 important now because they are stories of my mother's
19 great-grandmother's stories. So they go back 200

20 years. So those stories become very important,
21 particularly when you have a child.
22 Isn't that right, Reverend?
23 But it's a lot of history that's in Jasper County.
24 The founder of South Carolina State University was born
25 in Jasper County, right in Switzerland. He was a great
0027

1 friend, I guess, to Robert Smalls. And it's a number
2 of other stories like that.

3 Just like Dr. Bostick said, my family -- my family
4 grave site is in the Okatie Plantation, which is south
5 of Ridgeland. And we can only visit it during a
6 certain time of year.

7 This area up here in the Robertville, Pineland,
8 Tarboro community was -- was a lot of cotton
9 plantations. The Bostick family was a very wealthy
10 cotton growing family up in this area.

11 DR. BOSTICK: That's history.

12 MR. GARDNER: That's why Highway 321 is
13 called Cotton Hill Road.

14 So we have a number of different sites, a number
15 of different -- it's important culture, the way that we
16 worship in our churches, the way that our choir sings,
17 those are -- those things came from West Africa. And
18 they're very important.

19 So, like I said, I've got, got Ms. Gwen Henry back
20 here. And we always talk about history all the time.
21 Gwen, she is the director of the welcome center that's
22 in Hardeeville. It's the most -- it's the busiest
23 welcome center that's in the state of South Carolina.

24 We also talked about the economic benefits, the
25 historical benefits and also the educational benefits.
0028

1 Jasper County has something no other county has: 33
2 miles of I-95 and seven interchanges, pretty soon to be
3 eight. So the economic impact of the Gullah-Geechee
4 Corridor, in order to preserve that and to sustain that
5 corridor, is in Jasper County. Because we have
6 African-American museums. You take -- they're closing
7 all the time. Because if no one goes, then it closes.
8 So we have 100,000 cars a day pass right on I-95. We
9 can be a major resource center for the Gullah-Geechee
10 Corridor.

11 Now, I have made this spiel to the Hardeeville
12 city council. And they're very much in tune to it.
13 It's to the economic development arm that's in
14 Hardeeville and in Jasper County, and to some of our
15 planning commissioners. And they're very in tune with

16 that. So we have a great opportunity that's in Jasper
17 County.

18 Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Thank you, sir.

20 SENATOR PINCKNEY: My, my grandmother passed
21 a little over ten years ago now. And I remember her
22 talking about stories of a pestle and mortar, before I
23 knew what a pestle and mortar was. Then, when I found
24 out what a pestle and mortar was, I said, Well, maybe
25 my great-grandmother was a pharmacist. But, you know,
0029

1 she'd talk about using a pestle and mortar to beat rice
2 out of the husk and different things.
3 My, my mother's grandmother lives in Marion
4 County, up the coast. And she's in her mid eighties.
5 And who knows how long she or others may be around? I
6 don't know how many story projects or listening
7 projects we've done, but we've got a great resource in
8 the senior citizen center right in the community. I
9 don't know how many times we've just had tape recorders
10 or DVDs or camcorders and just recorded those old
11 stories that we all take for granted. Or, you know,
12 next time we go to Big Mama's house for a big dinner or
13 something at the church, I mean, things that James'
14 family may have talked about for 23 years, I may not
15 know of or may not be able to connect with. But maybe
16 there is something. But then our children may never
17 have those stories, if we don't record them and that
18 kind of thing. So I think that could be really
19 important. Many historical societies don't know how
20 to, and have just not, captured the African-American
21 history. I'm sure there are a lot of things about
22 plantation life that we don't like and reflect in the
23 history books. But I'm sure there were some other
24 times that were fun and gave us a glimpse of what our
25 connections are and were to West African culture in a
0030

1 way that we may not know, unless we hear some of those
2 old stories. So, I mean, you know, a camcorder or a
3 DVD may seem like a lot of money, but I think an
4 investment in some of those now and the future could be
5 a way to record the stories, preserve the stories.

6 I think NPR has a big project, I think the Story
7 Time or StoryCorps, where they park a bus and they just
8 record stories of people in the neighborhood. It may
9 be a mother and a father talking, it may be a child and
10 a parent talking, or an uncle. And they just kind of
11 hear the stories. And what's more natural than that,

12 when it comes to family and the community, listening to
13 somebody else talk about their life, something that
14 they may have just taken for granted, but may be
15 extremely important? And that's that person's five
16 minutes of fame. And they're -- and that's very
17 important.

18 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Thank you.

19 MR. GARDNER: I want to say a little
20 something about oral history, a little something about
21 oral history. Me and one of your commissioners,
22 Mrs. Althea Sumpter that's out of Georgia, we did the
23 oral history project from the Coosawhatchie Community
24 Center, from their seniors. That was done when I was
25 working with the county, maybe about four or five years
0031

1 ago. So we did do that.

2 Now, we also talked about grave sites. And in the
3 Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, I did a lot of
4 research there. There has been -- we found at least,
5 in the wildlife refuge currently, we found at least
6 nine abandoned slave grave sites that's in the refuge.
7 On Fife Plantation, which is also a part of the refuge,
8 which is on the right-hand side of 170, the other
9 site's on the -- no, the other site's on the right-hand
10 side of 170. But also in Fife Plantation, which is on
11 the left-hand side, we found at least another, another
12 three grave sites there of abandoned graveyards.

13 But, but that oral history has been done at one
14 community center, which was Coosawhatchie. And the
15 reason we did Coosawhatchie, because they have the
16 better smelling biscuits in Coosawhatchie than
17 Robertville.

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: You got to get some taste.

19 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Food, food stories.

20 MR. PINCKNEY: I'm Alex Pinckney and resident
21 of Robertville.

22 My father was from a place they call Sand Hill,
23 now is called Stokes Bluff. But my father and his
24 brother was fishermans. And I often hear them talk a
25 lot about the history that they had.

0032

1 I know when I was boy we used to go down to the
2 river. They had an artisan well there. And my father
3 said when they was living there, they got water from a
4 spring in those spots. And they had a way that they
5 used to trap fish into Camel Lake, which is still on
6 property that the family owns.

7 The thing why I mention that, I serve on the

8 planning commission with Dr. Bostick. And he knows
9 that one of my main issues is that, especially in the
10 black community, is there's so much heirs' property.
11 And we have to do whatever we can to keep our family
12 property in our family. In fact, was a week ago, two
13 weeks ago, we had a special meeting. And had a lady
14 come down from Charleston that is with the Heirs'
15 Property Foundation. And she gave a lot of pointers of
16 things that we can do to preserve our family's
17 property. And with that's a lot of history go along
18 with that.

19 And on the other side of my family, my grandmother
20 was a Hearn (ph), and my two cousins here, Virginia
21 McRoy (ph) and Barbara Martin.

22 My -- her grandfather, my great-grandfather, was a
23 man of significance, Mr. Horry. Because even if you go
24 to the Lawton Cemetery, people that was buried back in
25 the day had these very high tombstones. It let you
0033

1 know there was a person of significance.

2 And the big, big house that was there at the
3 center spot of Robertville got burned down. But
4 Robertville itself was a real large place. It had a
5 bank. It had a blacksmith shop and everything. But
6 when they had the Civil War, they came and they burned
7 all these things down. But, you know, even -- we don't
8 talk about it.

9 And, you know, when I'm way away from home, I make
10 significance, Robertville, where the guy who wrote
11 Roberts Rules of Order, his home is Robertville. In
12 fact, the people that I used to work for, she had the
13 opportunity of meeting him and knowing his family. In
14 fact, they wanted to come back to Robertville and do a
15 reunion because of, you know, he got a lot of history
16 of significance of Robertville.

17 And the people I used to work for, the Tutens,
18 they own that big house. And she's got documented that
19 that house is over 135 years old.

20 So it's a lot to be desired from this area,
21 Robertville and Pineland. And the significance of
22 great things, people who lived in this area have done.

23 So, you know, in fact, Ms. Whelan was speaking,
24 one of the houses they had was -- one of the house had
25 a lot of history. The house had been there and was
0034

1 built special design, special different things. And we
2 didn't reserve (sic) the history.

3 And I know it's one now that is just sitting

4 there, the one that Jenkins had. Over where the
5 Jenkins, there was a sawmill, there was a store there,
6 a blacksmith shop. All that history need to be
7 reserved.

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have pictures of my old
9 house.

10 AUDIENCE MEMBER: So in the
11 Robertville/Pineland area, there's a lot of significant
12 things happened that we didn't take for granted.

13 And had a big -- fought with the county council.
14 Where the old one-room school was, there was an arch
15 there. And it had been there for years. It was there
16 one day. Then the next day we look, it was gone. And
17 we asked somebody. They said it was cracked. It had
18 been there. It was standing perfect. But they took it
19 down. So -- and that's another thing, all the old
20 one-room schools. Because there was one in Tarboro,
21 one in Wagon Branch. And all these places, we need to
22 put a marker there. Because that where most of us, our
23 ancestors, got their start, in those one-room schools.
24 Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Amen. Thank you,
0035

1 sir. Thank you.

2 MR. GARDNER: I said I wasn't going to say
3 anything, Dr. Campbell.

4 Then, once you got -- Mr. Pinckney brought
5 something else. He brought something else up. He
6 talked about the schools. I serve on the, on the local
7 school board. And Jasper County had two Rosenwald
8 schools. You know, Julius Rosenwald, the
9 philanthropist, worked with Booker T. Washington to
10 build a number of Rosenwald schools across the
11 Southeast. There was one, the Mallory School, behind
12 St. John's church, and was one right down the street
13 from me, on Logan Street. Those sites are still there.
14 I think the one behind St. John's is abandoned, but
15 it's got some old remnants of the building there. The
16 one on Logan Street has been purchased. And it's a
17 house there, right by the basketball court, the
18 basketball court I grew up playing on. So it's two
19 Rosenwald school sites here also in Jasper County.

20 Now, the old Ridgeland middle school and
21 elementary school was bought -- that property was
22 bought in 1952 from Ms. (inaudible), who was Reverend
23 Ike's mother. Reverend Ike owned, still owns -- he
24 just passed away last week -- he still owns property
25 across the street, which they built houses for school

0036

1 teachers. Most of the school teachers in Jasper that
2 worked at -- the Ridgeland elementary -- well, the
3 Jasper, the Jasper high school was the first
4 consolidated school for African-American students in
5 the Ridgeland area.

6 The people think West Hardeeville School is named
7 West Hardeeville because it's on the west side of
8 Hardeeville. Well, Hardeeville is not big enough to
9 have an east or west side. That school was built and
10 named after Matthew E. West, who was an
11 African-American educator. Matthew E. West was married
12 to Mr. Shanklin's daughter that the Shanklin school in
13 Beaufort is named after. Ms. West is still living in
14 Beaufort. She's still very active. She's about 97
15 years old. So that school was the first consolidated
16 school for African-Americans in the south end and the
17 Jasper school was the first consolidated school for
18 African-American students in the north end of the
19 county.

20 So we still have a lot of school history that,
21 being on the school board, we have no plans of
22 preserving that history. It's not even talked about,
23 but it -- it needs to be preserved.

24 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: You want to say
25 something about Reverend Ike?

0037

1 MR. GARDNER: I can say a little bit about
2 Reverend Ike. I can -- I can't say a lot. But
3 Reverend Ike was born in Ridgeland, born in my
4 community. My mother and Reverend Ike went to school
5 together.

6 Our local bus stop, I lived in an area that was
7 called the big road, which every -- you know, every
8 black community has a big road, which is bigger than
9 any other road because the rest of them were dirt
10 roads. But we had one bus stop in that community. And
11 it met at Reverend Ike's mother's store, a little, a
12 little store right side of the road. So she took all
13 the kids in, in the morning, when it was cold. And so,
14 so she was very active in the community.

15 And I think, by the time I got large enough,
16 Reverend Ike had moved away. But he was born right in
17 my community, right in Ridgeland.

18 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Is the property still
19 there?

20 MR. GARDNER: His property is still -- his
21 property is at the corner of Bees Creek Road and

22 Capitalville Road, so his property is still there.

23 MS. GRANT: Okay, good evening. My name is
24 Zelda Grant. And I am the assistant to Michael Allen,
25 who is one of the commissioners of the Gullah-Geechee
0038

1 Corridor Commission.

2 You know, this is the quietest church I've been
3 in. You know, in the Gullah-Geechee tradition, if two
4 or three or four folks got together, it was some hand
5 clapping and some foot stomping. And, you know, that's
6 the Gullah-Geechee tradition.

7 I grew up in the Georgetown area. And, you know,
8 I feel like the whole Corridor is home. I was in
9 Atlanta for over -- well, right at 35 years. And I was
10 so glad to get back home. I've been home now almost
11 two years. And so I just claim the whole, the whole
12 thing. I was so glad it went all the way up to
13 Wilmington, North Carolina, and down to Jacksonville,
14 Florida.

15 And I've been to many meetings now. And I feel
16 that, you know, we're all wanting our community to --
17 well, we should all want our individual communities to
18 shine. But I want to plant a seed in your mind, that
19 this is a whole corridor. You know, all of the work
20 that has gone into this, is for one cohesive region
21 here. And I feel that the Gullah-Geechee Corridor
22 should be just like going to Yellowstone National Park
23 or something. It should be -- I mean, people pack up
24 the children and the cat and the dog and everything and
25 go trucking all the way across country to say they went
0039

1 to one of the seven, whatever, you know, the natural
2 wonders of the world and all that kind of stuff. Why
3 shouldn't that happen for the Gullah-Geechee Corridor?
4 Why shouldn't the people just start coming in? It's
5 like, Oh, my God, I've got to go and see what, what
6 I've been missing, you know, what, what the
7 Gullah-Geechee people have, has preserved up until this
8 point.

9 I'm going to sing a little song. Y'all going to
10 help me?

11 Because, again, this is, like, the second or third
12 church I've been in, that we've had meetings. A lot of
13 our meetings are at the library or, you know, community
14 center or whatever.

15 But my grandmother was a missionary. And I know
16 I've been to every Lowcountry church between here and
17 yonder, okay? And, and we didn't have cushions. Did

18 y'all go to any of those churches that had just the
19 benches? And our legs were kind of short. So if we
20 sat all the way back, it was going to catch your leg,
21 you know, before you get to the knee and you're going
22 to get a splinter, you know. Okay. So, man, I was
23 like, Lord, is this what going to church is all about?
24 You got to go and pick splinters out your -- excuse
25 me -- you know, every time you go to church.
0040

1 We go out in the back, I mean, when church was
2 over, we'd -- it was -- it was the pump. Pump the
3 water. I'm talking about country. I'm talking about
4 this is what Gullah people did. You brought your food,
5 might have been then -- then, you know, if you didn't
6 want to eat what was being cooked. But I remember
7 going out there and everybody drinking out the same --
8 when they pulled that water up, everybody drinking out
9 the same cup. And the outhouse and all of that.
10 So when we're remembering and preserving, we've
11 got to cover all of it, all of it. As much of it as we
12 can. And I know some of you remember what I'm talking
13 about.

14 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Amen.

15 MS. GRANT: And, again, if I was in a church,
16 and I can remember my grandmother be up front. And,
17 you know, it's funny, to this day, when I come in the
18 church, there can be seats all the over the place, but
19 I will come pretty close to the front. And somebody
20 asked me, they said, You don't have to go. I said,
21 Look, my grandmother, she was in the front. Either she
22 was in the choir or she was up because she was one of
23 the missionaries speaking that day. And she couldn't
24 see to the back pew, okay? So you had to sit up where
25 she could keep her eye on you. And, trust me, she had
0041

1 those eyes that kept you straight. I don't know. You
2 know, she just had it. Some of you got grandmamas like
3 that or had grandmamas that like that. All of that was
4 the Gullah-Geechee thing, okay? Didn't have time to go
5 and -- you know, you just -- you knew. Some things you
6 just knew. If I was -- if we were in a church back
7 then, we would have been singing a song something like:

8 Come by here, my Lord, come by here.

9 Come by here, my Lord, come by here.

10 Come by here, my Lord, come by here.

11 Oh, Lord, come by here.

12 And everybody sing:

13 Kumbaya, my Lord, kumbaya.

14 Oh, kumbaya, my Lord, kumbaya.
15 Kumbaya, my Lord, kumbaya.
16 Oh, oh, Lord, kumbaya.
17 Oh, somebody need you, Lord. Come by here.
18 I said, somebody need you, Lord. Come by
19 here.
20 Oh, somebody need you, Lord. Come by here.
21 Oh, Lord, come by here.
22 Okay. Thank you.

23 SENATOR PINCKNEY: You know, ma'am, you're
24 right when you said that the Gullah-Geechee culture is
25 not about a specific territory, but it is a region,
0042

1 we're all connected. I think some of our stories have
2 been localized, but it is regional.
3 In talking about and looking at this map, along
4 with public office, I'm an AME minister. And I see a
5 whole lot of AMEs in here, and a lot of good Baptist
6 folk as well. But if you look at this map, you can see
7 the migration and development of some of our churches,
8 in particular the AME church. And we have the
9 largest -- we have the largest confluence of the
10 largest gathering of church membership within our
11 denomination in this part of the country than -- well,
12 than any other place. And in particular, in Jasper
13 County, up through Georgetown, the largest
14 congregations or the largest concentration of
15 membership.

16 From what I was told, after the Denmark Vesey
17 uprising, basically all of our churches, any black
18 churches in the state was shut down. And most of them
19 were in the Lowcountry. It wasn't -- and there was
20 Emanuel AME in Charleston that was shut down, but
21 basically operated underground.

22 Bishop Daniel and Alexander Payne was basically
23 hauled out of South Carolina, along with Morris Brown.
24 And after emancipation, they came back. One of the
25 first places they stopped was in Charleston, to go back
0043

1 to mother Emanuel. And then they got to the ferry boat
2 and went down to Edisto Island. And they got off the
3 boat in Edisto. And almost every five miles, every ten
4 miles, they planted a church. So if you go up the
5 Edisto River in Charleston, from Edisto, you can travel
6 up to Highway 17 and you will see several AME churches
7 almost every five to ten miles. And after they left
8 Charleston and went to Edisto, they then went to Hilton
9 Head and Queen Chapel. And they -- the missionaries

10 basically did the same thing. They started or helped
11 to organize and then sent missionaries and ministers up
12 the coast, from Hilton Head up through Beaufort, up to
13 our area. So you'll see our churches along 321, from
14 St. Stephens in Hardeeville, up 321 to include Mount
15 Zion, which is right up the road. And all of our
16 churches in what we call the Beaufort District, just
17 right up. And, basically, we follow the rivers, the
18 Beaufort River, the Edisto River, the Charleston River.
19 But we also follow the train tracks. Highway 78 and
20 the train track that ran to Augusta basically formed
21 the churches coming out of the city of Charleston. 321
22 and the old CSX line, I believe the old CSX line, going
23 up to Augusta. We have our churches here as well.
24 And from Mount Pleasant going up to Georgetown is
25 called the Richard Allen Highway, unofficially, by the
0044

1 church because that is the largest congregation,
2 largest gathering of our congregation and some of our
3 largest congregations in the country, along what we
4 call the Richard Allen Highway, which is Highway 17
5 coming out of Mount Pleasant, going up to Georgetown.

6 And I'm sure that if we look at other
7 denominational histories, some of the churches may have
8 started around plantations. But then, they sort of
9 spread, whether it be from Silver Bluff, which is our
10 old neighbor coming out of Aiken, First AB, et cetera.

11 And I think another interesting piece of history
12 that is well known is that the story of 40 acres and a
13 mule came from our area, right out of Savannah and sort
14 of spread. And so some interesting church-related
15 history from our area. COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL:

16 Wonderful. Rich, rich, rich.

17 Well, we have only 30 minutes left, so you'd
18 better rush your thinking; otherwise, we're going to
19 close it down before nine. Any thoughts? We have some
20 comment cards. Do we?

21 MS. BARBER: We don't have any.

22 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: We don't have any
23 comment cards left. But you do have a chance -- you
24 will have a chance for comments later.

25 COMMISSIONER COHEN: We have two, Emory. I
0045

1 only have two.

2 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: We have two copies
3 here. And you can always send your comments in or you
4 can always reach us.

5 MS. BARBER: If you look on -- hello,

6 everybody. I'm Andrea Barbara. If you do look on this
7 Q&A paper here, there is our Web site, where you can go
8 and leave any comments. And also there is Mr. Michael
9 Allen's e-mail address. You can feel free to shoot him
10 an e-mail, if you have any questions, concerns with
11 regards to the meeting tonight.

12 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Thank you. Thank
13 you.

14 MR. GARDNER: Since Senator Pinckney talked
15 about the AME, I'll talk a little bit about the Baptist
16 Church history. In the Baptist Church's history
17 defense, Doc.

18 First African Baptist Church in Savannah is the
19 oldest African-American Baptist congregation in this
20 country. There is documentation that First African
21 Baptist, which was -- which is on the Savannah River,
22 established another church across the river called the
23 Pilgrim Baptist, which is Reverend Kitty's (ph) church.
24 He's the pastor of that church. That church was
25 started as a brush tent along what is called the Wright
0046

1 River.

2 Well, how the Wright River got established, it was
3 part of the Savannah River. And the Wright Brothers,
4 Jermaine and -- Jermaine Wright and I'm drawing a blank
5 with his brother. Jermaine Wright and his brother
6 owned what is now Turnbridge Plantation. They were
7 very wealthy rice planters. Their brother, James
8 Wright, was the governor of Georgia at the time. And
9 the Pilgrim Baptist Church was established along the
10 Wright River, which was part of Savannah River, as a
11 bush tent, which was a part of the First African
12 Baptist Church.

13 There's also extensive civil rights history in
14 Jasper County. There has been documentation that
15 Dr. King also had travels in Jasper County. I remember
16 when I was small and there were boycotts in Ridgeland,
17 they boycotted what was then the KB grocery store and
18 the Piggly-Wiggly grocery store. Mr. Joe Orr and my
19 wife's grandfather, Marshall Brantley, formed, formed
20 the NAACP in Jasper County. And I remember as a little
21 boy being on the picket lines, I guess with my mother.
22 And Dr. King traveled to visit, to visit Mr. Orr, which
23 was a neighbor of ours. So there's also some very rich
24 civil rights history in Jasper.

25 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Where is Pilgrim?
0047

1 MR. GARDNER: Pilgrim is -- I'll say it like

2 my mother say, it's on the other side of the world.
3 You know where Bellinger Hill is? It's at the end of
4 Bellinger Hill Road.

5 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Been there.

6 MR. GARDNER: You can't go any further.
7 That's -- that's -- once you get there, it seems like
8 it's on the other side of the world. But it's all the
9 way down Bellinger Hill Road.

10 MS. BARNES: Good evening. My name is Janie
11 Barnes. I'm a member of this church, this great
12 church. And as I sat there, I was thinking about some
13 of the things that I could have said, so I didn't want
14 to leave without saying it.

15 I feel that the children in the schools and our
16 children will really benefit from our culture and
17 learning more about our culture. And just sitting here
18 thinking, there are probably a lot of people in our
19 community and families that have things that we can
20 preserve from, that is -- maybe the house is gone.
21 But, for example, something was called a cane mill,
22 where they used to grind cane to make syrup and things
23 of that nature. My grandparents had thing of that
24 nature. For example, they may have things that we can
25 put in a center. For example, old scales that they
0048

1 used to weigh cotton manually instead of using more
2 technology, for example, metric scales and all other
3 kinds of things that we may have in our possession. So
4 it would be beneficial to our kids, in our schools and
5 in our community, and tourists, to just come and visit
6 things that we may collect from each other, to just
7 place in a central or a particular site on a property,
8 that we may -- they would allow some of us to go and
9 see, not on certain occasions, like they have it open,
10 like an old cane mill. And then some of our churches
11 may even have old baptism pools that were used outside,
12 instead of using indoor pools. And they may also have
13 things of that nature. So I feel it would be really
14 beneficial to our community, our tourists in coming to
15 this area, to visit and get a committee together and
16 see what we would have that we could use in our
17 centers. Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Thank you.

19 MS. HENRY: It was not my intent to stand,
20 but -- and I'm not, as you all, I'm not a big talker.
21 I do that at work. But what -- I'd like to ride a
22 little bit on what Mrs. Barnes just stated, a little
23 bit on what Mr. Gardner has said.

24 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Give us your name,
25 please.

0049

1 MS. HENRY: My name is Gwen Henry. I work at
2 the Welcome Center on I-95, Hardeeville. I'm a
3 resident of Hampton County, but Jasper is somewhat my
4 home now, too, as well.

5 But I can think back -- well, first of all, I'd
6 like to say the idea, the notion of a center that's
7 somewhere along the I-95 corridor in this area is
8 actually something that I think would be an asset.
9 Actually, I know. Because we get that question so
10 often from our visitors. You know, they'd like to find
11 additional information out about the Gullah culture.

12 And thinking along the lines of what Ms. Gardner
13 said, I'm remembering my grandfather, a self-proclaimed
14 carpenter, was a carpenter who could make his hammer
15 talk, okay? Built his home. We have a cane mill that
16 we're trying to preserve at this time. We have the old
17 whips. We have the field machinery that he's put
18 together, his old hoe that he's actually melted and
19 weld together. You can't break it, can't get rid of
20 it. It's there. So these type things, you know,
21 people are willing to see, to think back.

22 How many of us have families where we have
23 actually have fed the community? Remember those
24 old hogs, where we got together, we butchered the hogs,
25 the hogs were slaughtered back then and the community

0050

1 received so much of that?

2 You know, so these things are very important to
3 our culture. And I just -- I couldn't -- like, I had
4 to stand up and share that with you.

5 Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Thank you so much.

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just was thinking that,
8 sitting there, that as we gather information with this
9 Commission, that we look at the authors or the writers
10 that have written about the Gullah and the Geechee
11 culture. And when I'm thinking, you're bringing me to
12 remember the late Deacon Proctor Bright, who wrote --

13 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Beautiful stories.

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: -- many beautiful stories.

15 I think the name of the book that he published was
16 Whistle With The Wind. It was a beautiful book. And
17 stories like that, many short stories like that, really
18 brings to light the Gullah culture. And I think that
19 is something that all of us could benefit from, by, you

20 know, if we just collect that type from the many
21 different authors that have written in that style.

22 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Wow. Thank you.
23 That's a heavy one.

24 MR. GARDNER: I think, Mr. Campbell,
25 Dr. Bostick said you have something about the Honey
0051

1 Hill?

2 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Yeah, Honey Hill.

3 MR. GARDNER: The Battle of Honey Hill, which
4 is on -- which took place, which is now Highway 336,
5 right outside west of Ridgeland. There was a black
6 Union troop that fought in that battle. There's no --
7 there is a marker there about the Battle of Honey Hill,
8 but there is no marker about the Union troop that
9 fought there. I have a cousin that he did some
10 extensive research on that, so he does -- I know
11 someone that, that, that did a lot of research on those
12 Union troops. Because the White family that lives in,
13 lives in what we call Cherry Hill, they have some
14 relations back in that area. I'm related to them. So
15 they did some, some extensive research on the black
16 Union troop that fought along that -- it's at the
17 Battle of Honey Hill. So we have had that in Jasper
18 County also.

19 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Thank you, sir.

20 MR. PINCKNEY: Excuse me. Alex Pinckney
21 again.

22 Brother Gardner mentioned about Brother Marshall
23 Brantley and with the civil rights. Deacon Willie
24 Martin, that lived to be 102, he was there with them.
25 Deacon Robert Bryant, which was a member of this
0052

1 church, he died when he was 101. He was with them.

2 And also Roosevelt Jenkins, he was there with them.

3 But he was talking about reserving things. And I
4 don't know whether the members in here know it or not,
5 Deacon Martin told me this, he built this church,
6 designed it.

7 We used to have funerals, used to ring the bell
8 when the body come. I don't see that happen no more.
9 But right up in that steeple is a bell up there. And
10 he told me, that's a work bell that they used to use,
11 you go to work and when to stop. But they took it and
12 they got -- we've been trying to get it where it
13 operate electronically. But we don't -- we don't use
14 it at funerals no more. But it's probably 200 years
15 old.

16 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: There are two items
17 that I haven't heard discussed among you. One is the
18 language and the other is the Marsh Tacky horse. Do
19 you know that Jasper County probably has the largest
20 collection of Marsh Tackies anywhere, than anywhere
21 along the Gullah Corridor? Mr. David Lauder has been
22 preserving the Marsh Tacky horse. And so you are rich
23 with the Marsh Tacky. I don't know about the language.
24 DR. BOSTICK: We don't have that over here.
25 It's in Beaufort.

0053

1 COMMISSIONER COHEN: I just want to say,
2 Commissioner Campbell mentioned the language. And I
3 was wondering about the people in Jasper County. But I
4 guess they're not Geechee, so they don't speak the
5 language.
6 When Sister Zelda sang, Come By Here, that's my
7 favorite song. And I do try to preserve the language
8 and I say Kumbaya. Yeah.
9 So I was just wondering, because we were so
10 ashamed of this, this Gullah-Geechee language, because
11 people talk it down. When I was growing up, they said
12 it was broken English and we was country and backward
13 and everything negative in the world that I could have
14 heard during that time. And we bought into it.
15 And just about 13 years ago, we started
16 celebrating our cultural heritage on Hilton Head
17 Island.
18 It took me three years to speak the language. And
19 for a while, we had someone to come in from another
20 island and we paid them to speak Gullah to us, okay,
21 because we was ashamed. But I always say that was the
22 past, that was yesterday. Now I'm very proud to be a
23 Gullah, Gullah-Geechee, a Gullah-speaking woman. Y'all
24 know, we used to drop the W. We didn't say woman, we
25 say 'oman. (Remarks in Gullah.) See, y'all will

0054

1 forget. But I want y'all to remember the language.
2 Because that's us, okay? And I do preserve it now.
3 That's right. You tell the stories, too. I tell it in
4 the Gullah-Geechee language. Took me a while. I had
5 to go back and revive it in myself. Because we need to
6 do that, too. We don't need to forget that. Because
7 our people -- what did you say?
8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Tell one of the stories.
9 COMMISSIONER COHEN: Look, see, where you're
10 going at now. No. So I just -- I just want to kind of
11 bring that back to y'all, so y'all don't forget about

12 that. Because I heard -- you all know what grandmama
13 and granddaddy and your mother used to say, okay?

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Say something, a little
15 bit, a Gullah-Geechee story.

16 COMMISSIONER COHEN: Since we're in the
17 church, I'll just say this little one.

18 (Story in Gullah.)

19 So we've got to remember these stories. And we've
20 got to remember. Now, a long time ago, we all spoke

21 this language. Y'all talked about y'all in Jasper

22 County, y'all ain't that far from Hilton Head, okay?

23 Y'all spoke it, too. Y'all's grandmamas (remarks in

24 Gullah.) And there wasn't no porch, it was a piazza.

25 So y'all come on. Y'all need to -- y'all need to

0055

1 remember that language. I just want to put that plug

2 in there for the language.

3 Because, see, without the language, you know,

4 we're the people. So we are the people that spoke that

5 Gullah-Geechee language and wasn't no broken English.

6 Our people had to create a language. When they were

7 brought from Africa, they came from different parts of

8 Africa. They couldn't communicate on the plantation,

9 so they came up with their own language that they could

10 speak to each other. Okay. So let's not forget that.

11 I'm keeping it alive.

12 (Remarks in Gullah.)

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. GARDNER: Got to put a plug in for the

15 language in Jasper County. Dr. Campbell, I know you

16 wrote quite a few books. But the author -- one of the

17 authors of the Gullah-Geechee Bible is from Jasper

18 County.

19 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Irving Green.

20 MR. GARDNER: Irving Green. So we have

21 someone that's very valuable.

22 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: A very good book.

23 MR. GARDNER: A very good book. I think you

24 were -- you were at Penn when that was being done.

25 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Yeah.

0056

1 MR. GARDNER: Yeah. So Irving Green is one

2 of the authors from right up the street in

3 Gillisonville.

4 COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL: Amen. Thank you for

5 that. We had invited Irving's sister, Vernetta

6 supposed to have been here tonight. She is also a

7 Gullah speaker and helped us to put the Bible into

8 Gullah.

9 Okay. Anybody? Any last-minute remarks?

10 I want to thank each and every one of you for
11 coming. This has been very rich.

12 We will take this and incorporate it into our
13 deliberation about the management plan that I spoke of
14 earlier. And we'll go forth by partnering with the
15 various governmental groups in Jasper County, planning
16 boards and town councils. And these items that you
17 have mentioned, particularly the physical items, we
18 will make sure that's a part of the plan. And as we
19 talk to planning boards, we'll see about what we can do
20 about preserving family land, about preserving historic
21 sites, including the schools and marking the sites
22 where significant happenings occurred. And so you have
23 been very helpful. We -- we will be back in touch. We
24 will see what this plan is about in another year or
25 two, when it's completed.

0057

1 In the meantime, we hope that we will get more
2 funding so that we can help you with your projects in
3 preserving the Gullah culture. So don't stop doing
4 what you're doing. And just contact us any time you
5 feel we can help.

6 I thank you very much, Reverend Taylor, for having
7 us here in the church.

8 Want to thank again Mr. Gardner.

9 Mr. -- Senator Pinckney has left, but his input
10 was so very rich.

11 Thank the staff, Ms. Barber and Ms. Jones --
12 Grant, I'm sorry, Ms. Grant. I want to thank
13 Commissioner Cohen.

14 If nothing else, we'll ask the pastor to give us
15 the benediction, please.

16 We keep the Gullah tradition going. We start our
17 meeting with a prayer and we end with a prayer.

18 Thank you.

19 If you want to get details on these boards, we do
20 have the boards up that you can read.

21 MR. TAYLOR: (Inaudible) Sister Barnes came
22 up. I just want you to know also our church here
23 got (inaudible) 1864. And we also can trace our church
24 offspring from Silver Bluff, which was the first
25 church, Silver Bluff. So we're -- we're from Silver

0058

1 Bluff. And also our history will show you (inaudible)

2 I don't have it. I have -- history will show that. I

3 can trace on down from Silver Bluff, to have someone to

4 officially research. (Inaudible) another church from
5 Pilgrim. We just want to throw that plug in. And
6 we're very proud of our church.

7 So we thank you all for coming. And we had great
8 pride and joy by hosting you. And, personally, myself,
9 I speak for everybody else, I gained so much knowledge
10 here today.

11 And we ask God bless upon y'all and what you're
12 doing. You're doing great work. And I pray that God
13 will bless you all as you travel up the coast, the
14 coast here. And our history, put it together. And I
15 know it's lot of work and a lot of time and I'm so
16 grateful that y'all are taking time. And, matter of
17 fact, you're doing it from the heart, doing it from
18 your heart. And we appreciate what you're doing and
19 look forward to seeing you again. Matter of fact, you
20 will come back again to host, give us -- once you
21 compile everything together here, you come back here,
22 just let us know what you compiled together here and
23 just give us a summary. You're welcome to do that.
24 God bless you.

25 Okay. Well, let us all stand. Usually in church

0059

1 we stand for the benediction.

2 (Benediction.)

3 (The proceeding concluded at 8:57 P.M.)

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA:
COUNTY OF DORCHESTER:

WITNESS MY HAND AND OFFICIAL SEAL this 11th day of August, 2009, in the Town of Summerville, County of Dorchester, State of South Carolina.