

MAYOR:
Bradley D. Belt

TOWN OF

MAYOR PRO TEMPORE:
Russell A. Berner

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:
Stephanie Tillerson



COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Dr. Michael Heidingsfelder
E. Luke Farrell
Madeleine Kaye

TOWN ATTORNEY:
Stafford J. McQuillin III

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Council Chambers and via Zoom
June 11, 2024; 1:00 PM

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order:**
- II. **Approval of Minutes:**
 - A. Minutes of the April 10, 2024, Environmental Committee Meeting
- III. **Citizen's Comments:**
- IV. **Project Updates**
 - A. Shorebird Stewardship Program
 - B. Grow Native
 - C. Kiawah Conservancy Projects
 - D. Clemson PhD Bobcat Anticoagulant Study
 - E. Marsh Management Plan
 - F. Kiawah Go Green Initiative
- V. **Old Business**
 - A. Kiawah River Bridge Access Feasibility Study
 - B. Laboratory Testing for PFAs and Geoengineering compounds
 - C. Beach Walkover Ordinance
 - D. Pet Restraint Ordinance
 - E. Critical Habitat Ordinance
- VI. **New Business**
 - A. Kiawah Conservancy Betsy Kerrison Nature Trail Funding Request
 - B. Second-generation Anticoagulant Rodenticide Update and Discussion
 - C. Committee Organization Discussion
- VII. **Reports:**
 - A. Town of Kiawah Island
 - B. Kiawah Island Community Association Land & Lakes Management
 - C. Kiawah Island Golf Resort
 - D. Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board
 - E. Kiawah Conservancy
 - F. Turtle Patrol
- VIII. **Citizen Comments:**
- IX. **Chairman's Comments:**
- X. **Committee Member Comments:**
- XI. **Adjournment:**

Proposal for the Betsy Kerrison Nature Preserve and Trail System

Introduction:

The Kiawah Conservancy, in partnership with sweetgrass basket weavers and the Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce, presents a proposal for the creation of a public park and conservation corridor along Betsy Kerrison Parkway. This project aims to preserve wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and provide significant public benefits to residents of Kiawah Island, surrounding communities, and visitors. We hope the Town of Kiawah Island will help support this exciting project.

Project Overview:

The Kiawah Conservancy has acquired two properties, TMS 2030000042 and TMS 2030000067, totaling approximately 79 acres, which include pristine maritime forests, hummock islands, saltmarsh, and upland forests. Negotiations are ongoing for the acquisition of a third parcel, TMS 2030000043. Once acquired, the total acreage will be nearly 90 acres including 26 acres of upland area. The Kiawah Conservancy is committed to establishing a public park featuring nature trails, interpretive signage, meeting spaces, native plant gardens, and sweetgrass basket stands. Additionally, the removal of structures on TMS 2030000067 will significantly improve habitat restoration efforts, especially for critical local species like bobcats and other wildlife requiring resting and nesting areas.

Cultural Significance:

We have partnered with sweetgrass basket weavers and the Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce to establish a sweetgrass farm and multiple basket stands within the park. This initiative will help sustain the traditional craft of sweetgrass weaving, provide a demonstration area, and ensure the availability of materials for local artisans. The sweetgrass grown on the property and the access to the sweetgrass stands will be provided to the local sweetgrass artisans and to weavers in the surrounding area at no cost. Interpretative signage will be placed throughout the park to highlight the cultural significance of sweetgrass weaving, enriching visitors' understanding of Gullah Geechee heritage.

Parking and Access:

To accommodate large crowds for events and ensure safe access to the park, we propose a comprehensive parking plan and road access strategy. Ample parking spaces will be provided, with designated areas for event parking. Road access will be optimized to minimize traffic congestion and ensure convenient and safe entry to the nature trails and associated facilities.

Public Access and Use:

The park will be open daily from sunrise to sunset, offering residents and visitors ample opportunities for outdoor recreation and exploration. Periodic closures for vegetative and trail maintenance will be scheduled, with additional closures as needed for storm events. We believe this project will create a substantial natural habitat corridor and expand the trail system, benefiting the community at large.

Additional Information:

In addition to public access, the park will accommodate private events and activities, with a designated event space accessible to non-profit groups at reduced rates. During such events, public access may be restricted to ensure participant safety and enjoyment.

Funding Request:

Establishing this public park system is a significant endeavor requiring multi-partner support. We kindly request the reallocation of the \$75,000 previously approved by the Town for trails at TMS 2040000328 and TMS 2040000005 to the creation of the public park and conservation corridor at TMS 2030000042, 2030000067, and TMS 2030000043. By reallocating existing funds, we ensure a greater benefit to both the public and wildlife.

Additionally, we request \$125,000 to supplement costs for establishing an expanded trail system and necessary amenities such as safe entry and exit along Betsy Kerrison Parkway and sufficient public parking. Integrating cultural elements like the sweetgrass farm and basket stands will enrich the visitor experience while helping to preserve the heritage of the Gullah Geechee community. Providing funds for this ambitious project aligns with the Town's commitment to environmental stewardship and community enrichment.

In total, we request \$200,000 from the Town of Kiawah Island to support the master planning phase, parking infrastructure, and trail system development. Your support will help us create a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Thank you for considering our proposal.

Sincerely,
Sean Cannon
Kiawah Conservancy

