



**Community Engagement Council**  
**January 8, 2026**  
**176 Lockwood Drive**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees**

<b>Facilitators</b>	Joanna Gilmore, Clay Middleton, LaSheia Oubre
<b>CEC Members</b>	Julie Bowling, Millicent Brown, Stephen Vale Cofer-Shabica, Norm Dickerson, Jalen Evans, Harlan Greene, Jerome Harris, Lisa Jones, Madison Lee, Eric Manning, James Njonjo, Patricia Ploehn, Sharon Ramirez, Luqman Rasheed, Daniel Schmidt, Joshua Shumak
<b>Advisors</b>	Demetria Clemons
<b>Consultants</b>	Tonya Matthews
<b>Liaison</b>	Courtney Howard
<b>Staff</b>	Mark Berry, Paul Patrick
<b>Invited Guests</b>	David Hay (Property Committee Chair, Board of Trustees) Laura Lee Worrell (Senior Project Manager, CofC Facilities Management) Darryl Fyall (member, Board of Trustees)
<b>Guests</b>	John Fisher, Carol Jackson, Ali Rockett, Live 5 News reporter, Chuck Baker (CofC General Counsel), Christine Mahoney (CofC Director of Public Information), Christi Schultz (CofC Director of Architecture & Engineering)

- I. Meeting called to order at 6:01pm (Clay)
  
- II. Welcome
  - a. No additional feedback has been received on the mission/objectives document (Clay)
  - b. Welcome to CEC member Joshua Shumak who is attending for the first time today (Joanna)
  - c. Reminder of the role of the CEC, as stated in the Organizational Hierarchy document on the shared Google drive (Joanna)
    - i. *The CEC serves as a community-based advisory and stewardship body regarding the (a) Archaeology and Research: offering feedback and recommendations on the respectful recovery, study, and care of ancestral remains and artifacts; (b) Reinterment: advising on ceremony, location, and process in collaboration with descendant and faith communities; and (c) Memorialization and Interpretation: guiding the messages, design, and educational approach of the future memorial, commemoration, and interpretation.*
  - d. Expectations (LaSheia)
    - i. Members: should read materials, come prepared for meetings, and participate meaningfully with respect for all.

- ii. Facilitators/CofC staff: should listen, respond to questions and concerns, communicate regularly with respect, transparency, honesty and integrity.
- iii. Encouragement to provide written feedback if changes are requested. Use the established process for providing feedback. If none is received, the assumption is that everyone is in agreement.
- iv. Discussion
  - 1. Confusion about the process to approve the mission statement, etc. (Manning)
  - 2. Where are the responses to the questions that have already been raised? *In the document titled Questions and Concerns.*
  - 3. Should we set a deadline for submitting feedback? (Manning)
  - 4. Can we not be so fixated on the process? We need to have the opportunity to discuss things as they come up. (Brown)
  - 5. We are spending too much time on the mission statement. If there are no significant changes to suggest, let's move on. (Matthews)
  - 6. The embedded links and email acknowledgements have been useful. (Matthews)
  - 7. Have we invited the City of Charleston to be represented on the CEC? (Greene) *No City employees are on the CEC, however a recently elected city councilman attended the December CEC meeting.*
  - 8. We have no Native American representation on the CEC. (Brown) *Joshua Shumak is on the CEC and the College has been in communication with other tribal representatives.*
  - 9. We do not know who each CEC member represents (Ploehn et al)
- v. Attendees shared which group(s) they represent and/or their profession:

Joshua Shumak (CofC alum)	SC Commission for Community Advancement and Engagement (tribal liaison); Wassamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians (vice chief)
Rasheed Luqman	Islamic community
Madison Lee (CofC alum)	Preservation Society of Charleston
Jalen Evans	CofC student; Black Student Union (president)
Dan Schmidt (CofC alum)	Construction and real estate professional
Millicent Brown (CofC alum)	Humane and Friendly Burial Society; Protect and Respect the Bodies Coalition
Sharon Ramirez	CofC student; owns several non-profits and a for profit

Harlan Greene (CofC alum)	Retired CofC librarian; Preservation Society of Charleston; City of Charleston History Commission
Stephen Vale Cofer-Shabica	Circular Congregational Church; NAACP
Jerry Harris	Association for the Study of African American Life and History; former City of Charleston Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission (co-chair); Protect and Respect the Bodies Coalition
Tonya Matthews	All other groups mentioned; International African American Museum (president/CEO)
Eric Manning	Mother Emanuel AME Church (pastor)
Patty Ploehn (CofC alum)	Historic preservation specialist
Julie Bowling	Researcher and advocate for public burial ground under Harmon Field/Hagood Stadium
Lisa Jones	Historic Charleston Foundation
Demetria Clemons (CofC alum)	CofC Trustee Emerita
LaSheia Oubre	CEC Facilitator; Anson Street African Burial Ground; Protect and Respect the Bodies Coalition
Joanna Gilmore	CEC Facilitator; Anson Street African Burial Ground
Clay Middleton	CEC Facilitator
Courtney Howard	Office of Community Engagement
Mark Berry	Office of the President
Darryl Fyall	Board of Trustees
David Hay	Property Committee (Board of Trustees)
Chuck Baker	CofC General Counsel
Christine Mahoney	CofC Director of Public Information
Christi Schultz	CofC Facilities Management
Laura Lee Worrell	CofC Senior Project Manager
John Fisher	Charleston Museum archaeologist
Carol Jackson	Former member, City of Charleston Council
Ali Rockett	Post and Courier

vi. Motion

1. Made by Eric Manning - To set a date by which CEC members must reply to requests or forfeit their right to respond, being mindful that enough time is allotted to accommodate individuals with technology challenges
  - a. Amendment: deadline can be 7-10 days before the next meeting (Harlan Greene)
  - b. Amendment accepted by Eric Manning
2. Seconded by Jerome Harris

3. Final Motion - CEC members have until seven (7) days before the next meeting to respond to facilitators' requests for feedback or else they forfeit their right to respond.
  - a. Approved by voice vote

III. Presentation - Student Housing Efforts

- a. Presented by Paul Patrick, CofC Chief of Staff
- b. Other sites that were considered by the College
  - i. 363-369 King Street – finances did not work
  - ii. Lightsey Annex Building – not enough beds
  - iii. Wentworth property – not enough beds
  - iv. 8 Kirkland & 13 Coming – concerns from residential community
  - v. Days Inn on US 17 – renovation cost too expensive and could not move fast enough to address code issues
  - vi. Lease RFPs for existing private student housing
    1. 2021: leased 99 St Philip - only one response
    2. 2022: leased Warren Place - 930 NOMO too expensive
    3. 2023 – leased 61 Vandy - 3 other responses too expensive
    4. 2024 – no responses
  - vii. 200 Meeting Street – not residential and seller not willing to wait on the state process
  - viii. Wentworth/St Philip parking deck – CofC does not own and city requires that new development must replace the 503 parking spaces
  - ix. 243 King (former Christian bookstore/nunnery) – not enough beds
  - x. College Lodge – not enough beds to balance need/cost
- c. Challenges
  - i. Many factors have to be aligned - zoning, density, height, cost, a willing seller, proximity to campus
  - ii. Student demand - students protested in Cistern Yard demanding more campus housing
  - iii. decreased inventory of single family housing in the community (many short term rentals)
- d. Discussion
  - i. Is Rivers Green behind Addlestone Library intended to be a dedicated green space forever? (Greene) Response: *Nothing is off limits but there would likely be push back from students if a building were to be put there (loss of greenspace)*
  - ii. Did the fact that it was public burial ground give you pause? (Bowling) Response: *Yes, there was a lot of discussion about it and that's why we did the initial GPR.*
  - iii. What about the Charleston Water System site? (Rasheed) *We looked at that, explored an agreement, and had an appraisal done. The numbers did not work out.*

- iv. Was GPR done while cars were in the lot? The magnetometer does not work well when cars are present. (question by guest) Response: *There were a couple of student cars parked there during the break. We did not want to tow students' cars. We are aware that results are degraded when cars are present.*

IV. Presentation - Permitting Process and Work Plan for Project 205

- a. Presented by Laura Lee Worrell, CofC Senior Project Manager
- b. This is the permitting process that would allow the building demolition for archaeology only. This does not permit construction of a residence hall. That requires a separate process.
- c. Current approvals
  - i. City Board of Architectural Review has approved YWCA demolition
  - ii. Office of State Engineering has approved YWCA demolition
  - iii. City has approved a tree variance
- d. No free reign to demolish. Other approvals are still needed, including:
  - i. State Bureau of Water (pollution discharge)
  - ii. SC DES Bureau of Coastal Management (Coastal Zone Consistency certification) – manages the environmental side of the project
  - iii. SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) – manages the cultural resources side of the project
    - 1. CofC was instructed to work through all of the public comments and work into the second version of the plan. Plan version 3 is being developed with second round of public comments being incorporated.
  - iv. SHPO approval kicks off additional critical steps in the final approval
    - 1. SHPO → BCM certification → City paperwork submission → initial MS4 approval from the Technical Review Cmte → SC Bureau of Water MPDES approval → City on-site meeting with TRC members → final permit issued after site visit and any checkpoint processes are established
- e. Discussion
  - i. GPR
    - 1. Working to get the raw data from SM&E subcontractor for the first GPR
    - 2. The CEC recommended that the College do a 3D GPR prior to demolition or asphalt removal. College is moving forward and Dr. Scott Harris is involved in backchecking the contractor's proposal. Another GPR is still in the plan after the overburden is removed.
  - ii. Disagreement regarding whether “this is a done deal” or not and if the CEC's recommendations have any bearing
    - 1. SHPO has not given approval

- a. College is submitting CEC meeting minutes and working public feedback into SHPO work plans
    - b. SHPO work plan has been divided into three workplans
  - iii. NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act)
    - 1. Two ways NAGRPA can be initiated
      - a. if federal funds are being used (section 106) – federal funds are not being used for this project
      - b. if Native American artifacts or burials are found – will not be known until archaeology
    - 2. College has received a letter from the Muskogee Creek Nation and an initial meeting has been held
    - 3. NAGPRA process has not been officially initiated because we don't know what we have yet
    - 4. Note from Tonya Matthews - There is no official process for protecting Black bodies (makes reference to conversation between IAAM and Harvard)
  - iv. Incorporation of public comments in SHPO work plan
    - 1. Themes – technical nature, public requests, impact mitigation (documentation, salvage, education, repository, alternative options)
    - 2. Establishment of the CEC
    - 3. College has reached out to over 50 agencies, groups, churches, etc. for feedback
    - 4. Three work plans – professional examination plan, archaeology work plan, cemetery work plan, commemoration work plan
- f. Evolving conversation
  - i. What happens if SHPO says no? SHPO and DES say they are taking stock of what the CEC recommends in their decision making. (Brown)
  - ii. If SHPO says no, then the College walks away and we still have an abandoned building on the graveyard. Let's take the conversation there in our next meetings (Matthews)
  - iii. Are CEC members taking these discussions back to their groups? (LaSheia)
  - iv. I don't have an answer yet about what this group wants and I am looking forward to having that conversation (Matthews)
  - v. If SHPO says yes and the CEC says no, then what? (Bowling)
  - vi. The College of Charleston abandoning this project is not the best-case scenario. If College walks away, then there is no stakeholder to support community engagement, infrastructure, etc. With a private developer, those things go away (Matthews)
  - vii. Any outreach to SC DNR and other groups that will buy properties for preservation purposes?
  - viii. We know that the College embarked on this project for housing. The College went looking for one thing and found something else that is

- bigger. The question then becomes will you stick with us as a community to determine what is the best use of this site? (Brown)
- ix. Suggestion for next meeting: Socratic roundtable discussion so that CEC members can share what they want. Currently, CEC members don't know what each other wants. Maybe a meeting before the next meeting with just the CEC members (Ploehn)
  - x. What was the purchase price? \$27 million (Jones)
  - xi. What about a property swap with the city? (Bowling)
  - xii. We need to have the hard debate about what we (CEC) want (Matthews)
  - xiii. There is no timeframe. The seriousness of these issues cannot be limited. It might take us 10 years (Brown)
  - xiv. I reject the idea that only the College should decide what becomes of this site (Brown)
  - xv. Everyone here represents an organization or group of people. Are you going back to your group and asking what they want? Not a personal agenda, but a thoughtful group agenda. (LaSheia)
  - xvi. Let's come up with some scenario frameworks so we can respond to each other's ideas with compassion, love, and respect (Matthews)
  - xvii. Why didn't the College follow the state procedure (referenced by a meeting guest)? What is the state process? Response: *Will be covered at February meeting*
  - xviii. When does the College reach out to the City on whether remains can be removed? (Njonjo)
    - 1. Permit request gets us through archaeology. There are still other stop points and other permits during that process (Laura Lee).
    - 2. City Council (elected members, not city staff) approves whether graves can be removed
  - xix. SHPO will not give approval without a cemetery plan for protection and holistic treatment of human remains. CEC is supposed to weigh in on that. College also has to come up with an alternative plan. (Njongo)

V. Closing

- a. Communication to Board will be through Property Committee Chair Hay and liaison Courtney Howard
- b. Next meeting - Can CEC talk about what outcomes we want?
- c. We need more time to discuss. Perhaps a half day retreat? (Jones)

VI. Meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm