



Community Engagement Council
March 5, 2026
Meeting 5
125 Bull Street

Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Facilitators	Clay Middleton, LaSheia Oubre, Joanna Gilmore
CEC Members	Sharon Ramirez, Millicent Brown, Patty Ploehn, Luqman Rasheed, Eric Manning, James Njonjo, Walter Brown, Madison Lee, Julie Bowling, Jim Newhard, Stephen Vale Cofer-Shabica, Norm Dickerson, Shawn Gathers
Advisors	Omar Muhammad, Demetria Clemons
Consultants	--
Liaison	Courtney Howard
Staff	Mark Berry
Invited Guests	Justin Schweibler (Terracon), Blue Nelson (Terracon), Laura Lee Worrell (CofC Project Manager), Robin Soweka Jr. (Muscogee Nation), Abigail Dairaghi (Muscogee Nation), Savannah Waters (Muscogee Nation)
Guests	Jodi Barnes, Patrina Daniels, Karen Smith, Debra Holt, Juliette Lovell, DaNia Childress, Georgette Mayo, Sue Steed, Paul Garbarini, Donald West, Tiffany Harris, Sarah Platt, Darryl Fyall, Sam McDorman, John Fisher, Antionette Bennett-Bluford, Marionette Bennett, Verna Green, Victoria Hansen (SC Public Radio), Maria Washington (The Black Voice LLC), Grant Gilmore, Tamara Butler, Daron Lee Calhoun II

- I. Call to order at 6:05pm (Clay)
 - a. Reminder that this agenda reflects the postponed special call meeting a couple of weeks ago to review work plan comments from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). At that time, the SHPO comments had not been received so that meeting was rescheduled for our regular March meeting.
 - b. Today we will include a review of the work plans. If you have feedback or suggestions, submit them to the Community Engagement Council email.
 - c. Welcome to the Avery Research Center
 - i. By Daron Calhoun (Facilities, Outreach, and Public Programming Coordinator))
 - d. Acknowledgement of invited guests (Joanna)
 - i. representatives from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation
 - ii. representatives from Terracon

- iii. College of Charleston project manager
- II. Engagement with tribal nations (Laura Lee Worrell)
- a. Letter has been sent to and received by the 13 federally recognized tribal nations that have interest in South Carolina. Only two responded to date— Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Catawba Nation.
 - b. A meeting is planned for tomorrow with representatives from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Response to Catawba Nation is forthcoming.
 - i. Concern that the CEC is just now hearing about the letter and did not have any input in the drafting process, etc. (Millicent)
 - ii. Will we be educated on Native American customs associated with removal of human remains, or if that is even appropriate? (Julie)
 - Response: The letter asks the tribal nations to share any relevant customs, if they desire (Laura Lee)
 - iii. Did the letter include a timeline to respond? (Jim)
 - Response: We gave no restrictions on time to respond (Laura Lee)
 - a. Note that we do have representation from the Tribal community on the CEC (Joshua Shumak, Vice Chief Wassamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians).
- III. Presentation of Work Plans
- a. Documentation of YWCA site (1 of 4) - (Justin Schweibler, Terracon)
 - i. Determination that the building is a significant site and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
 - ii. Professional examination (mitigation tasks) consists of written history, measured drawings (not at the level required for federal section 106 compliance), photographic documentation, and commemoration strategies
 - iii. Coordination of stakeholders – SC Dept of Environmental Services, YWCA, City of Charleston, College of Charleston
 - Observation that CEC is not named on the slide as a stakeholder (Millicent)
 - a. Response: CEC is considered part of the CofC in this presentation. In the workplan, the CEC is listed as an independent entity.
 - iv. Documentation and Research Tasks

- v. Salvage, Preservation, and Interpretation Tasks - salvage of architectural elements, standardized historical survey, interpretation and commemoration plan (YWCA, Christine O Jackson)
- vi. Public engagement and educational tasks
- vii. Public access to documentation – via CofC libraries and project website
- viii. Student Internship Program - for CofC student
- ix. Community Trust and Education - making findings broadly accessible)
- b. Ongoing coordination and compliance requirements
 - i. Continuous stakeholder coordination
 - ii. Approval of architectural drawings by SC Dept of Archives and History approval
 - iii. Community engagement and commemoration
 - iv. Regulatory compliance - adherence to Planned Unit Development, and city Board of Architectural Review approval
- c. Future public access and educational impact
 - i. Long-term preservation (libraries)

IV. Archaeology and Cemetery Work Plan (Blue Nelson, Terracon)

- a. These work plans are negotiations with SHPO because no state laws give detailed guidance on removal of burial grounds. That's why community engagement is so important.
 - i. draft archaeology work plans (2 of 4) have been submitted
 - ii. draft cemetery work plans (3 of 4) have been submitted
- b. Archaeology work plan – targets non-mortuary cultural features (foundation, refuse pits) revealing past settlement and land use
- c. Cemetery work plan – respectful excavation of burials and burial materials (human remains) in 18th and 19th century context
- d. Compliance and community engagement – DNA testing or not; ethical considerations
- e. Preservation and documentation goals
- f. Regulatory and ethical framework
 - i. Regulatory compliance - state law and Coastal Zone Consistency certification in consultation with SHPO
 - ii. Ethical treatment of burial sites - why CEC is here; ethical and respectful handling of human remains with community consultation and licensed supervision

- iii. Archaeological standards - SC standards for artifact classification, documentation, and lab analysis

g. Feature archaeology methods (SEE TABLE IN SLIDE)

Category	Methods	Tools
Feature identification	Soil contrasts, structural outlines	Trowels, shovels,

h. Human remains and cemetery excavation methods – SEE TABLE IN SLIDE

- i. Excavation approach, screening, documentation, handling

i. Technical documentation standards

- i. Standardized documentation tools
- ii. Alignment with standards
- iii. Sensitive data protection (exact burial locations)
- iv. GIS and total station mapping

j. Curation and reporting

- i. Comprehensive technical reporting
- ii. Ethical burial documentation
- iii. Artifact curation standards
- iv. Community engagement and dissemination (finding shared through StoryMaps, etc while maintaining confidentiality)

k. Discussion

- i. What are the measures to maintain security? (Julie)
 - Response: fencing, security cameras have been installed, 24/7 monitoring, tents (Blue, Laura)
- ii. Have you ever done this before? (Stephen)
 - Response: Yes (Blue)
- iii. While there may not be any state standards. there are professional standards from state archaeologists that provide strict, ethical guidelines (Millicent)
- iv. Work stoppage happens when human remains are found. Coroner comes out once or when it is established this is burial ground, not for every find. Funeral director removes the remains. The number of funeral directors needed and the amount of space needed to store is unknown at this point. (Blue)
- v. What about Chapter 43 Section 27 – expedient removal of remains? (James)
 - Response: the work plan has to get approved before we can get to that part (Blue)

- vi. Who on Terracon’s staff has been vetting the plans before they go to SHPO? (Jim)
 - Response: Terry Russ (Blue)
 - vii. Have you scheduled a meeting with SHPO re: Ground Penetrating Radar plan (Jim)
 - Yes. Meeting included representatives from CZC, SHPO, CofC, and Terracon (Blue)
 - viii. Any anticipated timeline and how to get staffing to scale to meet those timelines? (Jim)
 - “I don’t like putting a timeline on such things”; Staffing should not be a problem. We can use junior bioarcheologists as technicians and more senior bioarcheologists as supervisors; At least 2, but depends on how many people are excavating (Blue)
 - ix. Have you looked at Asylum Hill or other projects help generate an estimate? (Jim)
 - We have to see what we have to know what size crew we will need (Blue)
- l. Commemoration Plan (4 of 4) - (Laura Lee Worrell, College of Charleston)
- i. One of CEC roles are to advise on blessing or celebratory ceremonies, burial treatment, funeral director selection, reinterment, and ethical scientific analysis. An RFP will have to be done for the funeral director(s) selection.
 - ii. NAGPRA
 - iii. Transparency and Information Protection – public website updates
 - iv. Commemoration Plan – highlights the lives of marginalized communities buried in the historic cemetery with cultural reverence and education
 - v. Key Takeaways
 - Comprehensive archaeological approach
 - Legal compliance and documentation
 - Community engagement and commemoration
 - vi. Current status – revise and resubmit based on SHPO comments (#3) recently received
 - vii. Commemoration strategies
 - viii. Reburial and Reinterment Framework

- ix. Stewardship
- m. Key comments
 - i. SHPO professional examination plan
 - CEC – inclusive decision making
 - Full appendix documenting SHPO comment history
 - Clarification on approvals (SHPO does not issue signed approvals; College may begin work without formal SHPO activation)
 - Better alignment of all plans for regulatory clarity
 - ii. Archaeological work plan – key comments
 - Structured plan for pre-disturbance GPR, monitoring, and post demolition GPR
 - SEE SLIDES
 - iii. Cemetery work plan
 - Legal compliance
 - Community involvement
 - Cros-referenced archaeological plan
 - iv. Commemoration plan
 - Living document approach (ongoing updates with community input and archaeological findings)
 - Inclusive decision making (with CEC)
 - Transparent and accurate interpretation
 - Clarification on approvals (SHPO does not issue signed approvals)
- n. Work plan revisions and updates
 - i. Work plans revisions – requested staging does not comply with overarching stormwater and land disturbance permitting
 - ii. Archaeology and cemetery work plans will be combined back into a single work plan
 - iii. Site activity – YWCA documentation – if you drive by in the next month or so, you may see professionals on site doing work to make the inside safe and documenting the YWCA
 - iv. Permit status – CZC Certification – working with DES/SHPO to clarify complaint work plan stages to facilitate permit conditions
 - Weekly meetings with SHPO
 - Need to get on the same page re: vocab to be sure vocab is consistent across the work plans

o. Discussion

- i. It was noted that community engagement is essential, but what about descendant community consultation? (Madison)
 - The College's intent is for the CEC to help with getting feedback beyond the CEC (Laura Lee)
- ii. It seems that Terracon has a fluid timeline, it seems the CEC's length of service is unknown, but do the decision makers at the College understand that fluidity? (Patty)
 - The College acknowledges that archaeology will take as long as it takes (Laura Lee)
- iii. Does the College have a permit to demolish the building?
 - Yes. But demolition cannot occur until the work plan is approved and measured drawings accepted (Laura Lee)
- iv. Was there ever a thought to keep the YWCA building intact? (Walter)
 - If it was on the street, that might have been possible. By being in the middle of the property, that makes it more difficult.
 - a. Example of Charleston High School remaining intact on MUSC's campus. Potential for fewer human remains to be uncovered if the building is undisturbed. (Walter)
- v. Can you downsize the building or make a replica of the building instead of demolish it? (Luqman)
 - A replica may be viewed as Disney-like so we have to be careful about how something like that is done (Laura Lee)
- vi. I'd like to be there or be notified if any remains of a Muslim are found (Luqman)
- vii. Will there be a group of religious leaders to consult with? (Julie)
 - Yes, we want the CEC to help with that (Laura Lee). Send such information to the Community Engagement Council email address.
- viii. Suggestion to have the memorial on Marion Square rather than on the campus so that it can be respected.
 - Don't limit your suggestions based on concerns for safety. We can work through that. (Laura Lee)
- ix. Questions from James (all responses from Laura Lee)
 - Has there been a cost analysis or feasibility study done? Yes
 - Has this been shared with the Board of Trustees? I believe so.
 - Will it be put in the CEC Google Drive? No.

- Has the College responded to SHPO's comment about Alternative Use? The BOT resolution is the response to that comment. The College is not working on an alternative use of the site.
- x. Is a member of the CEC or facilitator going to be in upcoming SHPO meetings? (Jim)
- Not at this stage because meeting minutes are being provided. We are using other mechanisms to inform SHPO of CEC recommendations (Laura Lee)
 - a. Jim – information is not consent
- xi. Can you describe experience you have with a project of this scale in an urban context? Do you have a similar report that you would be willing to share with us? (Patty)
- Miami 1809 project, 444 project. We are not the principal firm on that so we are not writing the reports and they cannot be shared. When we write reports, they are for the person who hired us so we cannot share without permission. (Blue)
- xii. Question about unanticipated discoveries.
- Stop work, call coroner to determine if murder or archaeology . Keep digging until reach archaeological sterile. (Blue)
- xiii. Since SHPO does not issue signed approvals, and the College can continue work, exactly what work can be done without SHPO approval based on where we are in this project right now? (James)
- SHPO is a consultant to DES. DES issues the CZC certification with conditions
- xiv. SHPO mentioned specifically that the city has some approval processes in place. Can you tell us about that? (Millicent)
- GPR → set up of security around the site → removal of asphalt to get clearer site for second round of GPR → report
 - Then go to the city and ask for permission to do further excavation
- xv. Did you see any comments from SHPO that brought you pause? (Millicent)
- No, this is a negotiation (Blue)
- xvi. Have you done work like this in the Lowcountry before? (Millicent)
- Not on a burial ground (Blue)

- xvii. Is the College going to share the updated plans before submitting them to SHPO? James – wouldn't it be useful for SHPO to receive our minutes with our comments on the plans (James)
 - No, we think it's more comprehensive to share with you the work plan and the comments (Laura Lee)
- xviii. Are we going to be able to call upon our advisors to give us insights on the SHPO comments? (Millicent) – Yes.
 - Demetria – as an advisor, I recommend that someone from this group (facilitator, liaison, member, or advisor) needs to attend or at least hear what is being said at the SHPO meetings. CEC only meets once per month, but if four additional meetings are taking place between CEC meetings, then the CEC is not up to date.
 - Omar – has submitted recommendations to the facilitators and is requesting that they be shared with the CEC. Recommendations are based on the workplans that were revised and submitted to SHPO, as well as the comments from SHPO.
 - a. The document was received today and will be shared with the CEC this week. (LaSheia)
 - As a reminder, send any recommendations and/or comments about the work plans to the Community Engagement Council email address that you as CEC members would like shared with SHPO. You do not need to wait until the next CEC meeting to submit those.

V. Old Business

- a. Native American representation on the CEC
 - i. Question about why Muscogee (Creek) Nation was not invited to be on the CEC. Stated that not having a local presence left them uninformed. Requested to be able to submit an application to join the CEC.
 - ii. Comments in opposition to allowing additional Native American representatives on the CEC (LaSheia)
 - The application process is now closed
 - How will requests from other groups be handled?
 - What about people in Charleston who requested to join the CEC after the application period closed?

- Why two from Muscogee Creek Nation and one from Catawba?
 - Concerned about equality
- iii. Comments in favor of allowing additional Native American representatives on the CEC
- It has been stated that this process is unfolding and we have the opportunity to make changes. (Millicent)
 - From the beginning, we said we needed Native American participation on the CEC. It never got resolved as to why people who want to be part of the process cannot be part of the process. (Millicent)
 - We need to provide the means for obtaining consent from descendent communities (Jim)
 - We have a critical gap here—federally recognized tribal nation—so this is a legitimate request (Jim)
 - Patty – I don't think we should approve the mission, goals, etc until we have completed the committee composition. I am willing to give up my seat to allow a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation to join the CEC.
 - Speaker (Savannah Waters) from Muscogee Nation - We will submit only one name.
- iv. Motion (Millicent)
- To allow contingent representatives of Muscogee Creek Nation be allowed to join the CEC.
 - Amended to invite for full CEC membership two representatives from Muscogee (Creek) Nation and one representative from Catawba Nation.
 - **Final version of motion** – invite to the CEC for full membership one representative from the Muscogee Creek Nation with the understanding that, if we hear from other tribes that also received letters, they be brought on too.
 - a. Seconded by Luqman
 - b. Approved by voice vote (unanimous)
- b. Mission, Goals, Objectives
- Motion (Millicent) – to approve the mission, goals, objectives as submitted.
 - a. Seconded by Stephen
 - Approved by voice vote (unanimous)

- c. CEC Member Questions and Concerns not yet fully addressed
- i. Conversation about hearing from religious leaders
 - We have discussed how but not why. I would like to hear religious and spiritual perspectives on honoring the dead and stewarding the remains. Can we meet with religious and cultural leaders to discuss issues that should be addressed? (Julie)
 - Yes, we need to find the best people who can speak to these issues in a knowledgeable way (Millicent). We want to be able to defend our decisions (Norm).
 - Can we move this conversation to the April 2nd CEC meeting? (James)
 - Yes, please let us know if there are specific people that you would like to hear from (Joanna). We need a deadline for getting suggestions to the facilitators (La'Sheia)
 - By March 19 send your recommendations for speakers to the CEC facilitators (Millicent).
 - ii. Use of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) "Policy Statement on Burial Sites, Human Remains, and Funerary Objects" (2023) - a national policy document.
 - I bring concerns to the table as an archaeologist and member of the CofC archaeology faculty. We need to use ACHP guidelines for how to deal with burial grounds. For example. Principle 2 states that destruction of a burial ground should only be pursued if there are no alternative options available, and with informed consent of the descendant community. (Jim)
 - The more we learn about this site, the harder it becomes to justify the costs. I would like to see a cost benefit analysis to help understand the projected costs and the cost of alternatives. The university needs to make the case that there are no alternatives. To give informed consent, we need to see this information. I have a hard time seeing that this is the only space and that the time and costs justify it (Jim).
 - A cost benefit analysis will be shared with the CEC tomorrow (Joanna).
 - iii. Questions about NAGPRA and Federal funding

- In the glossary (provided to CEC members), it states that the College does not receive Federal funds – is this true? (Millicent).
- We are opposed to the statement that the College does not receive Federal funds and does not follow Section 106. The College will have a collection, so they are technically a museum. Legally NAGPRA will apply when the first bone is found because CofC does qualify under NAGPRA (Abby).

VI. New Business

- a. Board of Trustees Resolution Response Statement - drafted by Madison, Millicent, Jerome and James. The statement asks for a formal decision-making process. How can we share the statement? (Madison)
 - i. The statement was signed by CEC members present in the meeting.
 - ii. The statement will be shared via email for other CEC members to sign.
 - iii. We need clarity on communication and information flow (Millicent).
- b. Request that archaeologists who spoke at the last CEC meeting (Feb 5 – Sarah Platt and Grant Gilmore) make an estimate of costs, timeline, and their recommendations based on the SHPO comments and work plans, John Fisher and SC archaeology society, and from the college and Terracon – by the 19th.(James)
- c. Question about sharing recommendations
 - i. Where can we add our recommendations (Jim)
 - ii. We will create a new document for CEC member recommendations
- d. Someone from the Catawba Nation has now shared interest in joining the CEC (Millicent).

VII. Meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.