



**Community Engagement Council**  
**May 14, 2026**  
**Meeting 7**  
**86 Wentworth Street**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees**

<b>Facilitators</b>	LaSheia Oubre, Joanna Gilmore, Clay Middleton
<b>CEC Members</b>	Sharon Ramirez, Abigail Dairaghi, Jim Newhard, Harlan Greene, Madison Lee, Millicent Brown, Jerome Harris, James Njonjo, Walter Brown, Julie Bowling, Shawn Gathers, Norm Dickerson, Lisa Jones, Luqman Rasheed
<b>Advisors</b>	Omar Muhammad, Demetria Clemons
<b>Consultants</b>	Tonya Matthews
<b>Liaison</b>	Courtney Howard
<b>Staff</b>	Paul Patrick, Mark Berry, Christine Mahoney
<b>Invited Guests</b>	Laura Lee Worrell (CofC), Scott Harris (CofC), Andy Clark (Liollio), Jay White (Liollio), Liz Corr (Liollio), Matthew Ngango (Liollio)

- I. Call to order at 6:01pm (Clay)
  - a. Welcome
  - b. Review of agenda
  
- II. Old business
  - a. Follow-up to the four CEC motions passed in April (see handout)
    - i. Jim (motion #4)– are we going to have an independent comparative review? Response: Recall the discussion at a previous meeting questioning how a review be independent if the College pays for it. Additionally, the College has already presented and provided a detailed 10-year comparative review of site locations and nothing has changed since then.
    - ii. Julie, Millicent, Jim, Walter (motion #4)– what about a cost analysis? Looking at this site as the most cost efficient does not hold water? Response: The presentation that Paul Patrick shared in January did include costs and number of rooms that could be provided with each site that was considered
    - iii. Jim (motion #1) - The CEC asked for the cost analysis in response to new archaeological information. That was not provided.

1. The update is provided on the Google drive and includes references to the Wentworth garage. It is owned by the City and will be demolished. If the College were to buy it today, it would need to replace the same number of parking spots (500+) that the garage currently provides
- iv. Norm – the College needs dorms; if there is another site that will not take years of archaeological work, that will work well
- v. Jerry (motion #2) – the response says “some submissions are shared concurrently.” Which submissions and with whom are they shared?  
Response: Laura Lee will explain that later in the meeting
- vi. Jim (motion #1)– regarding the motion for Board clarification, is the Board receiving consultation from historic preservation specialists to understand the meanings of their words?
  1. **ACTION ITEM** – If any CEC members would like to recommend historic preservation specialists to the Board of Trustees, send those names/contact info to the CEC email address by June 1
- vii. Millicent (motion #1) – the CEC strongly urges the Board to contact the provided suggested specialists in a timely manner

III. New Business

- a. Project status update (Laura Lee Worrell)
  - i. Work plans and procedural summary matrix (SEE SLIDE)
  - ii. Coastal Zone Consistency permit conditions have been issued
    1. Stage 0
      - a. Measured drawings of the YWCA have been submitted
      - b. SHPO comments received (May 8) and will be shared with CEC
      - c. Revised drawings to be resubmitted
      - d. Abatement (not demolition) is occurring now and includes removing asbestos)
      - e. Additional photography is required afterwards
    2. Stage 1
      - a. Pre-disturbance GPR conducted by Scott Harris
      - b. Report to be submitted to SHPO by June 4
        - i. SHPO must approve release of the report to the CEC to ensure no sensitive information is included
    3. Stage 2

- a. Stages 2a (security fencing, stormwater fencing) and 2b (demolition)
  - b. Final land disturbance permit approval to take an additional 8-12 weeks
- iii. Abigail: South Carolina has a new SHPO. Has this all been to the new SHPO? Response – we have been assigned SHPO officers, John Sylvest, Robert Larsen, and Elizabeth Johnson.
- iv. Madison: Doesn't the College have to go to the City to remove burials? Response – That is correct. Until that approval is granted, if any human remains are found or disturbed, then the site has to be covered. Nothing can leave the site.
- b. Pre-disturbance GPR report (Scott Harris)
  - i. Feb 13-14, 2026: site evaluation of the ground that was available (e.g., could not go inside the YWCA)
  - ii. Attendees/observers: CEC members (Madison Lee, Jerome Harris, Walter Brown), two members of the press, and six students
  - iii. 199 different swaths collected, yielding 3500+ vertical profiles spaced at 3.1 inches
  - iv. Overview of key vocabulary (see slide)
  - v. Drone survey was conducted
  - vi. Raw data and process data will be made available in whatever way the College determines it can be shared
  - vii. Takeaways from GPR
    1. Inconclusive findings
    2. No grave shafts noted
    3. Discernible features visible are likely cisterns, basements, wells
    4. Subtle features seen are 12-15 feet long and are inconclusive at this point
    5. Other visible features include utilities, light poles, concrete bumpers, walls
    6. Lisa: Are there sites where you would do the GPR and it could be obvious that this was a burial ground? Response - In modern cemeteries you would see obvious rows. Not the case in this site. As an example, notes the variability of visibility of burials at Stono Preserve due to age of the burial and other factors.

7. Norm - this GPR is inconclusive and the first was also inconclusive, so will cleaning up the site make a difference?  
Response – it really depends on the environmental conditions (dry, wet)
  8. Lisa - will the third GPR take place after the permit is issued?  
Response – yes
  9. Millicent - what is the next level of investigation?
  10. Abigail - what is the water table in the area? Response: 7.5 ft water table but this does not necessarily indicate how high the water will rise in the soil column
- c. Discussion about virtual meeting option (LaSheia)
- i. To accommodate our CEC member who lives out of state and to be mindful of summer travel schedules, does the CEC want to provide a virtual meeting option? Conditions to consider:
    1. CEC members would be able to communicate during the meetings, but not the public
    2. Meetings will remain open to the public
    3. CEC members in the Charleston area would be encouraged/expected to attend in-person
  - ii. Tonya - Suggestion to use the Zoom webinar mode vs. regular Zoom meeting mode to better manage who has access to speak and who does not
  - iii. If you know you will need virtual access due to travel, please give one week's notice so the access can be set up
  - iv. **DECISION** - CEC approved virtual option with the above conditions by voice vote (unanimous)
- d. Enhancing communication via webinar series (Jim Newhard)
- i. Suggestion to put together a webinar series to educate ourselves, provide opportunity for greater public engagement, bring in expertise from other parts of the country, and allow more time for deliberation in meetings
  - ii. Each webinar would focus on one topic and be archived for later access
  - iii. Draft run of show (90-120 minutes)
    1. Welcome, context/framing, panelist opening statement, moderated discussion, CEC questions, moderated public discussion, closing

iv. Motion by Jim - The Community Engagement Council recommends the creation of a separate, publicly accessible webinar series, sponsored by the CEC in partnership with the Program in Archaeology and the Center for Historical Landscapes, devoted to major themes related to 106 Coming Street. These webinars should be structured as moderated 90-120 minute sessions focused on a single topic, with brief expert framing, dedicated CEC questions, and moderated opportunities for public questions and engagement. The purpose is to create a more open venue for public learning and dialogue, while protecting the formal CEC meeting as a space for the council's deliberations, motions, and recommendations in keeping with its adopted mission, objectives, goals, and values.

1. Seconded by Jerry

v. Discussion

1. Norm – You would set this up? Response: Yes, in collaboration with archaeology and Center for Historical Landscapes faculty

2. Norm – could also do a webinar on the site selection analysis

3. LaSheia - Would ask previous presenters to re-do their presentations

4. Shawn - Would this be publicly accessible? Response: yes, the series would be housed on a College departmental YouTube channel

5. Jerry - What are the costs associated and who would bear this cost? Refers to question posed at a previous meeting regarding the availability of funds if the CEC wants to convene meetings, etc. Response – part of the professional service/obligation of the participating departments

a. Sharon – I like this idea; more organized, engages more people; perhaps funding can be available through some grant writing that could happen down the road

b. Jerry – looking for financial commitment from the College to support outreach activities of the CEC

c. Jim – time, technology resources; other expenses

d. Harlan – the College is already providing infrastructure support for our meetings (space, technology, etc.)

6. Jerry – call the question

7. **DECISION** - CEC unanimously approved the webinar series (voice vote)

8. Tonya – if this works, this could be a model for exploring other topics beyond archaeology
9. Norm - if the CEC wants to use the facility for a community meeting, will the College provide it? Response – you ask the facilitators, and the facilitators will ask the College

- IV. Commemoration/ interpretation design concepts (Andy Clark, Liollo)
  - a. Joanna - Feel free to jot down notes on the reflection sheet provided
  - b. Introduction of Liollo colleagues who are present
  - c. Want to share some history, experience, and ideas for commemoration for your feedback
    - i. Process is more important than the outcome
    - ii. Overall sequencing – currently, in the middle of land disturbance permit #1; the process is ongoing
    - iii. Primary benchmark for every project - Listen first, draw later
    - iv. Significant histories of the 106 Coming St site
      1. YWCA, Christine O. Jackson, municipal cemetery
  - d. Prior experience
    - i. Wilmot J. Fraser elementary school
      1. Former equalization school → Early College High School
      2. Community engagement, historical elements in the school (portrait of Fraser, iron gate inspired by Philip Simmons, timelines, etc)
    - ii. St. Helena Library at Penn Center
      1. Oak tree, community-inspired design elements (fishing net, praise house)
    - iii. Charleston Progressive Academy
      1. Memorial
    - iv. College of Charleston – Septima Clark marker
    - v. Many other examples as inspiration
  - e. Concepts
    - i. New fire lane to connect the two parcels (99 St Phillip + 106 Coming)
    - ii. Commemoration in phase 1 on the Coming St side (the more highly visible side)
      1. Celebratory legacy of the YWCA, Civil Rights legacy (southside)
      2. Contemplative zone of the cemetery (northside)
    - iii. Along Coming Street and wrapping around the street
    - iv. Student entrance to be separate from public entrance

- v. YWCA celebration incorporated into the piazza with sandwich shop
- vi. Purple shaded area (see slide) is where yet to be determined archaeological information and feedback from CEC can be incorporated
- vii. Intentional architectural elements and interpretation
- viii. Use of side of AT&T building to tell the story (touch screen elements, etc)
- ix. Call for local artists, use of shape texture, colors to reference West African environment

f. Discussion

- i. Shawn – how many stories and students will the building have?  
Response: 7 stories. 600 students in phase 1 + 400 students in phase 2
- ii. James – have you worked on a project where there has been resistance to building on the site because of a burial ground?  
Response: Not knowingly, but many in the community resisted the demolition of the Fraser school
- iii. James - How do you keep the contemplation site quiet? Response: Around the corner is about as quiet as it can get
- iv. LaSheia - Will the contemplation site be accessible 24/7? Response: Hasn't been discussed yet; lighting and security needs to be factored in
- v. James - Have you come up with any other uses of the site other than a dorm? Response: Our scope is to design a building when the archaeology is completed
- vi. Millicent – Appreciate the inclusion of the original Y building; Cautions about assigning so much value to Christine O. Jackson and her role, and asks that the designs are careful not to promote inaccurate information. Commemoration and memorialization are not the same as cultural regard and respect, so the issue of community resistance should not be overlooked. How can you have a quiet, contemplative experience on a college campus in a space where college students do what college students do?
- vii. Abigail – It's interesting that the theme of the presentation is human dignity; no mention of Native people; Might be useful to have a section on NAGPRA in the commemoration. Response: we are looking to uncover any data about the site that we can incorporate

- viii. Sharon – interesting to have public art pictures of the history/people.  
The design needs more public art
- ix. James – does this rendering incorporate a site to reinter any human remains that may be found? Response: that is something the College will have to determine based on how many remains, how much space will be needed, etc.
- x. Harlan – how do you pre-plan without knowing what will be found? Response: that’s the challenge with this process and why we have been trying to engage in the past year; trying to make progress without putting the cart before the horse;
- xi. Harlan – has Liollo been involved in any design considerations for a memorial on another site? Response – we haven’t had any conversations about that
- xii. Madison – are you waiting until archaeology is complete before seeking BAR approval? Response: Not for conceptual approval
- xiii. Walter – is there a plan to maintain any of the 1960s structure? Response: we were told it was going to be removed, as it does not meet current code, is below the floodplain, and would need to be moved from the fire lane location
- xiv. Luqman – why can’t we save a piece of the wall and move it somewhere so it can be remembered? Response: it would be difficult to move. This can be studied, but has not been part of the discussion. Also, moving the wall is not consistent with historical preservation standards
- xv. Harlan – would moving the contemplative area it to the Vanderhorst side be quieter and allow for more contemplation? Response: we’ll take a look at it
- xvi. Norm – is your firm for the commemoration only or for the construction project? Response: we are the architects for the entire project.
- xvii. Norm – is the height restriction due to the soil? Response: No, it’s not the soil. Maximum allowable height variance has been approved.
- xviii. Norm – important to tell the full story including Native Americans and the various peoples represented at the burial ground.
- xix. Abigail – does the design reflect your interpretation or the way the College described the project to you?
- xx. James – are there restrictions or guidelines on how large the commemoration space can be? Can more space be allocated to

contemplation? Response: it will be important to find the right compromise between space for contemplation and housing density needed by the College

- xxi. James – have College of Charleston students been involved?  
Response: Yes, there was some student engagement early on, but has been paused during the archaeology discussion
- xxii. Julie – irony of using the theme of human dignity on this site; appalled
- xxiii. Lisa – when will this go to BAR for conceptual? Response: Current plan is to go in July 2026 (has already been pushed back from last year)
- xxiv. Tonya – CEC might consider asking for if/then conceptual drawings (if human remains stay on site, if human remains are moved)
- xxv. Millicent – webinars can create an ongoing discussion with the community about alternatives
- xxvi. Harlan – did your design crew take into consideration the African American burial site in New York and the model of compromise?  
Response: that is a site we have studied
- xxvii. Jerry – how will we give feedback if these designs will be presented to the BAR in July? Response: the plan is for us to come back in June with ideas of what will be shared with BAR
  - 1. CEC upcoming meetings – June 4, July 9
  - 2. BAR upcoming meeting – July 8
- xxviii. James – what will community engagement process look like?  
Response: want to meet every two weeks to maximize CEC feedback and not wait an entire month; want to maintain momentum; could be a smaller group, if not the entire CEC
- xxix. Jim – CEC does not represent the entirety of the community
- xxx. Discussion about how community input will be provided prior to BAR submission
  - 1. CEC does not see itself as the body that can provide all of the input
  - 2. Is two meetings with the CEC enough?
  - 3. Need wider community input before July 8
  - 4. Lisa - Tension between building there vs. not building there. The College’s Board has made the decision to build there. The decision being made is not whether the building will be built, but rather what it will look like. Let’s not miss the opportunity to give the best feedback on commemoration

5. Millicent - The approval to build has not been given
6. James - Liollo cannot depend on the CEC as the only source of community engagement
7. Norm - The community needs to be made aware of when the city has to make a final decision
8. Jerry - The demolition permit was approved by BAR; at what point does the city become engaged and involved in what is going to happen on this site?
9. Harlan – suggests writing an op-ed to clarify that the CEC does not represent the community
  - a. Tonya - If the CEC does not represent the community, what is the role of the CEC? If the idea is to push the conversation to the larger community, then how can this smaller group be impactful?
  - b. Sharon – I thought that it was very clear. The time to discuss what we are discussing now would have been a long time ago?
  - c. Harlan – we are trying our best to represent the community, but who are we to represent everyone?
  - d. Luqman – after seeing the presentation, we realize that we need the community to give feedback and not put it on our shoulders
  - e. Joanna – it is a heavy responsibility. It is up to you individually to determine whether you want to step down to if you feel as though someone else would be more representative of the community.
  - f. James – the architecture has only been presented to the CEC once, so who else have they been consulting since it hasn't been us?
  - g. Julie – I thought this committee was coming together to discuss the morality of this project. I cannot continue to be a part of this. I resign. (leaves the meeting)
  - h. Luqman – I said it was a done deal from the very beginning
  - i. James – it's not a done deal yet, so the community can chime in on what else can happen here
  - j. Luqman – there was a two-phase discussion – the moral phase and the construction phase

- k. Jim – In response to Tonya’s question, what are we doing here? We are trying to help the College know what it should do. Now that the ACHP principles are part of the project, the College needs to show how it is abiding by those principles (e.g. do not disturb burial site without descendent approval). In other examples where community resistance has been great, those projects have ended up in the courts or to some other use
- l. Abigail – native tribes have not been consulted yet; one letter is not consultation
- m. Demetria – suggestion to recommend a motion to the BOT/CofC administration to provide a community update in the form of a charrette (architect and two other groups) and that the BOT Property Committee include a 106 Coming Street update at the June retreat. You want what is going on to be discussed at the retreat because the retreat is at the end of this year/beginning of next year. Put the responsibility of communicating an update to the community on the College, not on CEC members
- n. Norm – I like that idea. The beauty of this group is that we ask questions and the College has provided answers. The City of Charleston needs to take some responsibility.
- o. LaSheia - The CEC has been an important voice in raising questions and pushing for answers to hard questions. I think you should stay, and this is not all on you.
- p. James – at the August meeting last year, there was a huge uproar to the College’s plan to build a dorm. A year later the College is still planning to build a dorm. Nothing has changed.
- q. Harlan – who sets the agenda for the Board? Demetria – the framework of the agenda has already been set but you want to ask the property committee to discuss this project on the agenda
  - i. Tonya – the suggestion to ask for a community charrette is important

- ii. Millicent – is it time for the CEC to come before the Property Committee or the Board? Not that we talk for the whole community, but I am not afraid to take that on? Should the CEC ask to make a presentation to the Property Committee or the Board
- iii. Tonya – according to the website, the property committee meets in August; as opposed to trying to get on the Board retreat agenda in June
- iv. Motion by Walter - That the CEC go on record asking the BOT/College of Charleston administration to put on their retreat agenda an update on the 106 Coming Street project AND to consider a meeting with the CEC and the property committee
  - 1. Seconded by Jerry
  - 2. **DECISION** motion approved unanimously (voice vote)
- v. Demetria – what you want to ask for
  - a. BOT update (June retreat)
  - b. CEC + Property Cmte
  - c. Community presentation with architect (before July BAR meeting)
- vi. Harlan –the College should hold a community meeting to share the architect’s concepts and get public comment
- vii. Liollo – wants a town hall where people are having engaged discussion, not us (Liollo) being talked at
- viii. Tonya – need to have the three rooms to give the kind of feedback
  - 1. Norm – Scott Harris, Liollo, comparative analysis
- ix. James - Can the CEC request from Liollo an alternative use of the site
- x. Motion by Norm- That the CEC request that the College educate the larger community on how the project is progressing.

1. Seconded (multiple)
2. **DECISION** the motion was approved unanimously (voice vote)

V. Meeting adjourned at 9:03pm