

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT Executive Department



MEETING DATE:	October 13, 2026
PROJECT:	Consideration of Public Arts Committee Recommendation to Install a Poetry Walk Highlighting Local Poets at Buckwalter Amphitheater Park (Fiscal Impact: \$19,000)
PROJECT MANAGER:	Chris Forster, MPA, CPFO, CGFM, Assistant Town Manager

REQUEST:

Town Council consider approval of the Public Arts Committee (PAC) recommendation to highlight twelve (12) local writers' poetry at the Buckwalter Amphitheater Park.

BACKGROUND:

The Public Arts Committee was established in October 2023 to carry out the Council approved public art policy. The committee is responsible for making recommendations to the Council on publicly funding public art or art to be placed on public property.

The Committee requested staff to put out a call for poetry submissions. The committee selected the top twelve submissions to be highlighted. Three of which were submitted by Bluffton residents under the age of 18. They recommend that they all be displayed on individual pedestals to be installed at various locations around the walking trail within Buckwalter Amphitheater Park.

NEXT STEPS:

Approve, approve with conditions, or deny the recommendation to purchase the sculpture by Walter Palmer.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Sample Display
2. Selected Poems
3. Proposed Motion

Sample Displays



SELECTED POEMS

ENTRY 3

Nature's pipe organ... there was something about the snap, crackle, and pop tunelessly playing within the muddy quietude of the Lowcountry marshes, and the gentle skittle of tiny fiddler-feet, making sideways across the upper shore's sandy terrace. A chorus of shoreside palms fluttered in the wind amongst distant squawks and splashes here and there, each adding to the rhythmic song God had conducted long ago.

Time stood still here, at least for a moment ...until the swift pass of a boat breaks the artistry, spilling its wake, rattling the sleep of white clanging shell banks drowning the earlier song of stillness.

ENTRY 4

Mystical Memory Country Road

My memory wanders the country roads of my childhood.
Bare feet covered in ochre dirt as soft as confectioner's sugar,
kick up sweet smelling dust to fill my spirit with summer.

In the May River a pair of dolphins cruise by heading to an estuary
where Spartina grass shimmers in the sunlight
and the pungent scent of pluff mud wafts through the air.

Monarch butterflies perform their aerial ballet
among black-eyed Susan's, Queen Anne's lace and milkweed,
following me down this country road. I enjoy their company.

Thorns scratch my arms as I reach deep into
blackberry bushes to plunder their fruit.
Blackberry juice stains my fingertips and runs down my chin.

A whisper breeze caresses my face.
Summer fills my soul as I travel home to Bluffton
along my mystical, memory country road.

ENTRY 6

A Day in the Life Acrostic

Battered bateau the sandbar scrapes

Listing leeward, cast net draped.

Under unyielding southern sun

Fishing 'til the day is gone.

Fathers earned their keep this way

Tethered to the River May.

Oysters shucked by aging hands

Need the tides, the sun, the sands.

ENTRY 8

Whoopee

Flip flops, Tank tops.
Long hike, Beach bikes.
Low tide, Oysters fried.
Palm trees, Sultry breeze.
Full moons, Rockin' tunes.
Sandy knees, Ice cream please.
Golf swings, History sings.
Dolphin fest, Turtle nest.
Seabirds croon, Naps at noon.
Good eats, Gullah treats.
Southern town, Slowing down.
Salty kiss, Summer bliss
Bluffton time, State-of-mind.

ENTRY 11

Lowcountry Calling

When the scent of plough mud absorbs you,
and the heron makes you his own,
When oyster beds revealed by tides,
in moonlight are gently shown,

When your gaze over sacred ground,
is joined by a reverence you have found,
for a world unlike any you've ever known,
the Lowcountry is calling you home.

As the palm frond whispers through its days,
As the gull glides and the salt marsh sways,
As you move softly, silently, yet never alone,
the Lowcountry has welcomed you home.

ENTRY 15

A Lowcountry Path

some roll by, or strut; others trot
wrapped in oblivion, unmoving
some blast through like leafblowers
scattering us off their narrow paths

but the wisest saunter, breathe in
listen, as the woodpecker knocks
watch the gator and gray heron
sunning in side by side détente

catch another's eye, stop, and trade
wonderful stories of astonishing pasts
hard-fought wisdoms that warm and teach

avoid the passersby, frozen in mad
scurries and take the prettier
path at a proper lowcountry pace

ENTRY 17 – poet aged 14

River Stories

'neath nights of starry silver,
The steady May does flow
Far along the coastline into creeks and coves.
Driven by the moon-bound tides
In their celestial trail,
It bears years of stories on each ebbing sail.

Florets of hardship guide new brigadiers,
Until solace and flame shine mirrored in tears.
Unified banners once more line the street,
And we stand, as a town, a single heartbeat.

“Hark!” The wind whispers, it beckons us now,
With ripples on water and moss-laden boughs.
Weave us a tale through the twilit June breeze:
Our stories of rivers and culture and peace.

ENTRY 19 – poets aged 11 and 15 with their mom

My Bluffton

Here among the moss laden trees
Palmettos sway in a Carolina breeze
Sun dances off the water on the May
Fireflies twinkle, illuminating the way
Frogs serenade by the glow of the moon
Gators bask on the banks of the lagoon
Strangers wave and friends give big hugs
Neighbors catch up over coffee-filled mugs
The whole town shows up for a festival, parade
Oyster roast, shrimp boil, fresh lemonade
A Bible study, book club, farmers market in the park
A hometown crowd cheering on their team after dark
Day or night, in every beautiful season
Bluffton is our home, the people are the reason

ENTRY 20

I Hear Bluffton Singing

after Walt Whitman

children skip along tabby walks
at Wright Family Park,
their voices chasing the wind

off the Calhoun Street Dock,
fisherman's lines *whoosh* into the May River,
and pluff mud lingers on the breeze

Spanish moss sways under live oaks,
and teenager swing, their laughter
a song of selfies and sunsets

whispers of a gray-haired couple
mingle in the air, a soft melody
accompanying chimes of Church of the Cross

everyone with their own song,
together –

the heart of Bluffton
singing

ENTRY 21 – poet aged 16

Love found only in Bluffton

This love tasted like sunshine
The cool salty ocean running over my skin
Washing away all doubt
This love tasted like peace
Like tiny crabs peeking out of shells,
Bees bumbling around blooming flowers
This love tasted like home
The tang of seasoned fish melting against my tongue
Cooling my insides and making me feel this warmth
This love tasted like history
Like the Spanish moss clinging to our roots, our branches, our trees
Tastes like the May River, mapping the road to our hearts
This love can only be found in Bluffton

ENTRY 26

Magical Beauty

I hear myself say
The beauty never stops
In summer or winter
With marsh grass green or gold
The tides rolling in and out
The Lowcountry casts a spell
That makes you think
This is where I'm supposed to be

ENTRY 28

Twilight on the May

the old H. E. McCracken band sings out
across the riverbanks, Coach Whitaker
blows the whistle, the track team runs

past the Hilderbrand house, heading down
Main, a quick glance at Tony sitting on his
porch adding some funk to their stride

they round the circle near the Garvey house
sunlight lingers on their brows, pluff mud
fills the air in the one-mile town, where
every front porch is known and
twilight carries their names across
the May

Consideration of Public Arts Committee Recommendation to Install a Poetry Walk at Buckwalter Park.

Proposed Motion

*"I move to **approve (deny)** the recommendation from the Public Arts Committee to install a poetry walk highlighting local poets at Buckwalter Amphitheater Park for a fiscal impact of \$19,000."*