



## MEMORANDUM

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TO: Historic Preservation Commission  
FROM: Katie Peterson, AICP  
RE: Oyster Factory Park Public Project Improvements – Phase 2  
DATE: 9/6/2023

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**BACKGROUND.** At the request of the Town of Bluffton Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), Town Council adopted an ordinance at their April 9, 2019 meeting that amended the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Article 3 Application Process and Article 5 Design Standards to allow the HPC to review Public Projects and provide comment to the UDO Administrator for consideration. Additionally, Town Council revised the Town of Bluffton Process Table through a resolution to incorporate the review and recommendation of Public Projects by the HPC with the final review authority to remain as the UDO Administrator.

**APPLICATION REQUEST:** The Applicant, Charles Savino, on behalf of The Town of Bluffton, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend approval the following application:

**DP-01-22-016299.** A Public Project to include improvements to the outdoor pavilion and passive recreation areas located at the existing Oyster Factory Park (55 Wharf Street) in the Town of Bluffton, SC, identified by Tax Map Numbers R610 039 00A 0191 0000, R610 039 00A 0190 0000, R610 039 00A 0165 0000, R610 039 00A 0262 000, and R610 039 00A 0261 0000.

**INTRODUCTION:** The parcel, known as 55 Wharf Street, Oyster Factory Park, is owned by Beaufort County and operated through an agreement by the Town of Bluffton. The parcel, identified by tax map number R610 039 00A 065 000, is subject to a conservation easement which ensures the property is maintained to be public as recreational, scenic and a historic asset. The full Public Project scope of work includes improvements and expansion of the existing parking area at the corner of Bridge Street and Wharf Street, the installation of sidewalks, which were reviewed by the HPC in June of 2022, as well as the improvements to the outdoor pavilion and passive recreation areas which are subject to this memo.

The improvements to the pavilion include expanding an uncovered porch area on the south elevation of the pavilion and modifying the existing stairs, paver and concrete walkways within the site, the addition of a wood deck in surrounding the large oak at the center of the site, and a wood deck platform between oaks at the southern edge of the property. (See Attachment 1)

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ACTIONS:** As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.E.2, the Historic Preservation Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to this application:

1. Recommend Approval of the application as submitted by the Applicant;
2. Recommend Approval of the application with conditions; or
3. Recommend denial of the application as submitted by the Applicant.

It is important to note that the intent of Section 5.15 Old Town Bluffton Historic District of the UDO, is that the Section be user friendly and informative to the residents and the members of HPC and is not intended to discourage creativity or force the replication of historic models. Rather, it is to set forth a framework in which the diversity that has always characterized Bluffton can continue to grow. The Section also defines guidelines for design and materials similar to that used on structures within the Old Town, and it is the charge of the HPC to assess the interpretation of these guidelines as they pertain to applications using the established review criteria.

**REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS:** As established in section 3.18.2 of the UDO, Town Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.18 of the UDO in assessing an application for a Public Project located in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. The applicable criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. **Section 3.18.3.B.** Consistency with the principles set forth in the Old Town Master Plan.
  - a. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives also include the adoption of a form-based code that included architectural standards for structures located within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. These standards are included in Article 5 of the Unified Development Ordinance. The work proposed as part of this request is in conformance with those standards.
  - b. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan states that the Town should actively work to acquire properties for green space to further complete the green network through Old Town. This goal is specifically intended to enhance connections to the May River. The park, which already exists, is proposed to be enhanced to allow for the further enjoyment of the space and the May River, which specifically helps to complete the goals listed in the Plan.
2. **Section 3.18.3.C.** The application must be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.
  - a. *Finding.* Town Staff finds that, as long as the sidewalk placement and piers for any structure are sensitive to the root systems of the existing trees at the site, the proposed work will be in conformance with the other applicable provisions provided in Article 5.
3. **Section 3.18.3.D.** The nature and character of the surrounding area and consistency of the structure with the harmony of the surrounding neighborhood.

*Finding.* Town Staff finds that nature and character of the work is consistent and harmonious with that of the surrounding neighborhood. The mass and scale of the proposed work is appropriate for the location and the architectural detailing, while minimal, is sensitive to the neighboring properties.
4. **Section 3.18.3.F.** The historic, architectural, and aesthetic features of the structure including the extent to which its alteration or removal would be detrimental to the public interest.

*Finding.* No features are proposed for removal, therefore, this criterion is not applicable and the renovation of the site, as proposed, will have no adverse effect on the public interest.

5. Section 3.18.3.H. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

*Finding.* The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** It is the charge of the HPC to assess and interpret the standards and guidelines set forth in the UDO as they pertain to applications using the review criteria established in the UDO and to take appropriate action as granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.E.2. Town Staff finds the application meets the requirements of Section 3.18.3 of the UDO and recommends that the HPC recommend approval of the application to the UDO Administrator.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Site Plans