

Minutes

of the Quarterly Meeting of
the WeGOJA Foundation Board of Directors
Tuesday, July 25, 2023
Upcountry History Museum, Greenville

In attendance: Chairman Dr. Larry Watson, Vice Chairman Rick Devoe, and members Olivia Thurmond, Rev. Robert China, Meg Hunt, and Pamela Bynoe Reed. Also in attendance was Executive Director Dawn Dawson-House.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by Chairman Watson.

Chairman Watson welcomed new Board Member Olivia Thurmond from Aiken.

Chairman Watson welcomed guests attending the meeting:

Project Leaders:

- Darion McCloud, Arts Educator for the SC Arts Commission project
- Kate Borchard Schoen, Project Leader, and Timika M. Wilson, Project Administrator, for the Preservation Toolkit funded by the Mellon Foundation.

Visitors:

- Dr. LaQuana Reaves-Green, book author and school administrator consultant in Charleston, and her husband Sharod Green, Transportation Security Officer at the Department of Homeland Security;
- Brittany Smith, assistant manager of the Sandhills Branch of the Richland Library, and an enthusiast for board service and volunteer work;
- Bill Fitzpatrick, former Chairman of the Board for Preservation South Carolina, and a strategic partner in the restoration of historic Taveau Church in Berkeley County;
- Cynthia Gibbs (arrived just before lunch,) a former congregant of Taveau Church who leads the Taveau Legacy Project;
- Rev. Alexander McBride, pastor of historic First African Baptist Church in Beaufort, and
- Gwen Thurmond, sister of new Board Member Olivia Thurmond.

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Rick Devoe and seconded by Rev. Robert China to accept the agenda. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

A motion was made by Rev. Robert China and seconded by Vice Chair Devoe to accept the minutes of the April 20, 2023 board meeting, as amended (to correct an error omitting facilitator John Hall from the list of attendees.) The motion was passed unanimously.

Executive Director Dawn Dawson-House reported the financials for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023. The beginning balance of the WeGOJA Foundation operating account for the FY was \$40,191.67 and the ending balance was \$551,158.18. Revenue for the FY was \$750,894.18, and expenses were \$234,372.67.

After a brief discussion on minimal corrections and clarifications to the draft bylaws as requested in the April 20, 2023, meeting, Meg Hunt made a motion to ratify the bylaws as written. Rev. China seconded, and the bylaws were ratified unanimously by the board.

Following a discussion to pull-out a section called “Next Steps” from the draft Strategic Plan, Vice Chair Devoe made a motion to accept the plan and Olivia Thurmond seconded. The plan was adopted unanimously by the board.

Dawson-House expressed an interest in resuming a quarterly e-newsletter to WeGOJA Foundation supporters after the bylaws and strategic plan were accepted.

Project Updates

The WeGOJA Foundation completed 42 oral history interviews in support of the Gullah Geechee Seafood Trail project funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service’s Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant. The project team completed a documentary short, and it will be screened sometime this fall.

The WeGOJA Foundation was awarded \$300,000 from the General Assembly to study the feasibility of a Rosenwald Schools Trail as a State Park. The funding will be administered by the SC Department of Archives and History. One third of the funding will secure a land management consultancy. The remaining two-thirds will be used by the WeGOJA Foundation on an oral history project.

Historic Mitchelville continues to be a partner in the Airbnb social experiences project, but it is not generating significant revenue for the WeGOJA Foundation. Additional arrangements are under consideration.

Darion McCloud summarized the SC Arts Commission project, reporting that the WeGOJA Foundation hosted nine teachers in five virtual sessions and three field studies. Although the target audience was college students at Education Departments, teachers expressed the most interest. There was discussion on how to better reach teachers and college students, and Chairman Watson offered to establish a committee to assist with the project in the upcoming school year.

Project Leader Kate Borchard Schoen led a presentation that outlined the structural development of Preservation Toolkit project, including signing work agreements with Region Ambassadors; signing a contract with the tech team Period Three; establishing communications channels, shared platforms, calendars and deadlines; and sharing expectations. The WeGOJA Foundation expects to hold a major reveal gala during Black History Month in 2025.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Watson assigned the duty of Treasurer to Olivia Thurmond.

The following Board members will serve as chairpeople or members of the following Committees:

- Conference Committee – Pamela Bynoe Reed (chairperson)
- Finance Committee – Rev. Robert China (chairman,) working closely with Treasurer Olivia Thurmond.

- Projects Committee – Cory France (chairman)
- Publicity Committee – Pamela Bynoe Reed (chairperson,) working closely with Marc Rapport, Cory France and Meg Hunt.
- Grants and Fundraising – No chairperson has been identified for this Committee.

Executive Director Dawson-House reported that the Mellon Foundation is providing \$50,000 in its grant to help WeGOJA build a productive fundraising structure.

Executive Director Dawson-House reported that the WeGOJA Foundation submitted a Letter of Interest to Southeast Crescent, a regional economic development federal initiative, for a \$350,000 grant to promote African American attractions in “distressed” or “transitioning” counties in South Carolina. She will send a copy of the LOI to board members.

She also reported that the WeGOJA Foundation has been asked by the Center for Heirs Property to be a partner in its annual Commitment to Justice Award program in September.

Several discussions throughout the meeting offered best practices and tips for projects underway at WeGOJA, including:

- Consider video applications on webpages to capture attention, and QR codes to raise money for projects.
- Watch CBS Sunday morning’s report on Juliana Richardson – History Maker.
- Consider Tour of Churches in Beaufort as an Airbnb fundraiser.
- Search for Joshua School in Kershaw County as a Rosenwald; could it be added to a proposed state trail?
- Reach out to school districts and the South Carolina Education Association to develop CEUs for future SC Arts Commission teacher programs.
- Consider targeting Career Technology Education programs for teachers to get involved in SC Arts Commission project.

A presentation by Bill Fitzpatrick and Cynthia Gibbs outlined a restoration and public use project of historic Taveau Church near Cordesville. The project received \$450,000 in local funding but needs about \$500,000 more. The WeGOJA Foundation is best equipped to manage an oral history project that interviews former congregants and their descendants, and maps the nearby graveyard.

The next quarterly meeting will be held (likely virtually) on Tuesday, Oct. 24, at 2:30 p.m. The board decided to hold meetings on the 4th Tuesday of every quarter moving forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn M. Dawson-House
Executive Director