

Town Council

STAFF REPORT
Executive Office



MEETING DATE:	November 8, 2016
PROJECT:	Resolution to Support the Designation of a New Unit of the National Park Service in Beaufort County to Commemorate our Nation's Reconstruction Era
PRESENTER:	Scott Marshall, Deputy Town Manager

BACKGROUND:

Under the American Antiquities Act, the President of the United States is authorized, in his discretion, to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be national monuments. It is believed that there is a strong likelihood that prior to the end of his term, President Obama will designate a site to commemorate the importance of the Reconstruction Era in our nation's history. Since the Beaufort County area is rich in historical significance in the period leading up to the Civil War through the Reconstruction Era, it is a reasonable location of choice for such a site.

DISCUSSION:

Attached is a Resolution by Town Council to support the designation of a new unit of the National Park Service in Beaufort County to remember the Reconstruction Era. Beaufort County Council, the City of Beaufort City Council, the Town of Port Royal Town Council and the Town of Hilton Head Island Town Council have either already adopted a similar resolution, or are expected to adopt such a resolution. The attached Resolution calls particular attention to the importance of the Garvin House and to the importance of the Town of Bluffton in the Gullah Geechee Corridor.

RECOMMENDATION:

Town Council approve the attached Resolution as part of the consent agenda.

ATTACHMENT:

Resolution to Support the Designation of a New Unit of the National Park Service in Beaufort County to Commemorate our Nation's Reconstruction Era

RESOLUTION -

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE DESIGNATION OF A NEW UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN BEAUFORT COUNTY TO COMMEMORATE OUR NATION'S RECONSTRUCTION ERA

WHEREAS, it is essential that the United States confront all of America's past, particularly the parts about which we know very little; and

WHEREAS, our country learns and grows when we harness our collective power to better understand the past; and

WHEREAS, the United States has struggled for a century and a half to remember what happened in the wake of Slavery's abolition; and

WHEREAS, throughout Beaufort County, all aspects of Reconstruction's story – educational and political opportunities, transitions in the economy, and new religious and social institutions are well represented in numerous historic buildings and sites ; and

WHEREAS, on the bank of the May River at Oyster Factory Park in the Bluffton Historic District sits the Garvin House, a home built by a former slave of Joseph Baynard, whose plantation home stood on that same site until the Burning of Bluffton by Union forces on June 4, 1863 and which serves as the only known example of a home constructed and owned by African-Americans in Bluffton during the Reconstruction era; and

WHEREAS, the land upon which the Garvin House, Oyster Factory Park and the Town of Bluffton sit is identified as a collective resource important to the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, a corridor formally designated by the United States Congress in 2006 as a National Heritage Area to acknowledge contributions made to the American culture and history by African-Americans known as Gullah Geechee; and

WHEREAS, Beaufort was the home of Robert Smalls, a former slave who became a champion of free public education and was elected to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service has over thirty sites that focus on the Civil War and not one single park or monument dedicated to remembering the Reconstruction Era; and

WHEREAS, a special study commissioned by the National Park Service has recently concluded that Beaufort County, SC is the most appropriate place in the country for telling the story of the Reconstruction Era;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council of Bluffton, South Carolina joins the elected bodies of the City of Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal, the Town of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County Council in urging the President of the United States to move forward with the designation of a new unit of the National Park Service in Beaufort County to remember Reconstruction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Council of the Town of Bluffton affirms on this 8th day of November, 2016 its support for the designation of a new unit of the National Park Service in Beaufort County to remember Reconstruction.

Lisa Sulka, Mayor
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

ATTEST:

Kimberly Chapman, Town Clerk
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina
