

Media Release



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HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County Purchased Historic District Riverfront Property

The Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County closed Monday on the purchase of the Wright Family Property, located at 111 Calhoun Street. The property was sold to the Town and the County for \$1.5 million.

The purchase price was evenly split by the Town and the County through its Rural and Critical Preservation Land Program. Through a formal agreement with the County, the Town will assume primary responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the property, which is expected to provide additional public recreational space along the May River.

The property, situated at the south end of Calhoun Street, on the river adjacent to the Calhoun Street Public Dock and across the street from Church of the Cross, is both historically and culturally significant. The Squire Pope Carriage House, built circa 1850, sits on the property and is one of the very few structures in the Bluffton Historic District to survive the 1863 "Burning of Bluffton" by the Union Army during the Civil War. Future plans for the property involve converting it into a passive park to provide additional public access to the May River for Bluffton residents and visitors. The Town also expects to rehabilitate the Squire Pope Carriage House, similar to the Town's Garvin House rehabilitation which is located at nearby Oyster Factory Park.

"The Town is very grateful to the Wright family for partnering with us so we could purchase their property and create a public park with access to the May River," Mayor Lisa Sulka said. "The Wright family members were very gracious to reserve their property so Bluffton residents can enjoy this park for generations to come. This is a legacy for their family and a beautiful asset for the Town."

Bluffton Town Council unanimously approved this purchase at its March 14 meeting. This vote followed another unanimous vote by Beaufort County Council on March 13 to assist the Town in funding the purchase through its Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program.

Town Manager Marc Orlando said this purchase completes another component of the Town's award-winning Old Town Master Plan, adopted in 2006.

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“More than a decade ago, the Town identified this property as a desired acquisition as a part of the Old Town Master Plan,” Orlando said. “We are very pleased the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program partnered with the Town to increase the access to the May River. This is a major public addition to Bluffton’s Historic District as well as to the Town’s portfolio of recreational amenities for residents and visitors.”

Lisa Lord, Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program administrator, said this is an example of how the Rural and Critical Program improves the region’s amenities and overall quality of life through purchasing strategic properties for conservation.

“The Wright Family Property is a significant win and asset for the region,” Lord said. The May River’s scenic character and its importance as a waterway will provide many opportunities for public use.

“While we live among such natural beauty, there are few places where the public can enjoy the waterfront. The Wright Family Property will provide the public with enjoyment, while also protecting our natural resources throughout the years.”

Future improvements for the Wright Family Program will be programmed for fiscal year 2018 and beyond using various funding sources, to include Hospitality Tax revenues as well as federal, state and regional grants wherever possible.