January 31, 2012

RE: Sapelo Island Town Hall Meeting Invitation

Dear Geechee Gullah Culture Stakeholder,

Sapelo Island is Georgia’s 4th largest barrier island and is home to the last intact Geechee Gullah community on a Georgia Sea Island. Senator Lester Jackson of the 2nd District and myself are co-sponsoring Senate Resolution No. 727 creating the Senate Preservation of Sapelo Island Study Committee. I have also authored Senate Resolution No. 677 creating a Joint Study Committee on the Preservation of Sapelo Island.

The purpose of this communication is to acknowledge you as a critical stakeholder of Georgia. Additionally, the intent of this communication is to inform you of an unprecedented event of diverse participation on Sapelo Island, Georgia. Please accept this communication as an act of genuine partnership and an invitation to an extraordinary cultural experience. This invitation respects you as a committed stakeholder in the coastal region of Georgia.

The Town Hall meeting will be held on Sapelo Island Friday, March 2, 2012 from 7PM – 9PM at the Hogg Hummock Historic District’s Senior Citizens Center. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will also be hosting a meeting the same weekend. DNR’s meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 3, 2012 from 10AM – 12PM.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my invitation. We look forward to seeing you at both meetings.

Yours for a Better Georgia,

Senator Donzella J. James
35th District

Attachment: Sapelo Island Town Hall Meeting flier
S.R. No. 677 & No. 727
DNR draft agenda
SAPELO ISLAND TOWN HALL MEETING

Friday, March 2, 2012

7pm

Hosted by Senator Donzella James of the 35th & Senator Lester Jackson of the 2nd

Preservation of Sapelo Island Community Engagement Event

For additional information, please call (912) 601-3000.
Presentation of DNR Programs to Hog Hammock Community Members
March 3, 2012
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Welcome and Introductions  Mark Whitney

Wildlife Resources Division Responsibilities  Fred Hay
And Programs

Coastal Resources Division Responsibilities  Spud Woodward
And Programs

Historic Preservation Responsibilities  David Crass
And Programs

Questions and Answers  All
A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Greater Sapelo Island of McIntosh County, Georgia, is this state’s fourth largest barrier island and the home of important endangered wildlife, treasured historical structures, and the vanishing culture of a significant community consisting of the Geechee Gullah people; and

WHEREAS, approximately 97 percent of Sapelo Island is owned by the State of Georgia and is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, while the remaining 3 percent of the island under private ownership; and

WHEREAS, the island also consists of the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve, the University of Georgia Marine Institute, and the Reynolds’ Mansion State Park; and

WHEREAS, the Geechee Gullah people are the direct descendants of the enslaved of Thomas Spalding who was the original landowner of Sapelo Island, and following the conclusion of the Civil War, ownership of designated lands of the island were legally transferred to these original freed men; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Georgia law established the Sapelo Island Heritage Authority for the purpose of preserving the culture in the endangered historical areas of Sapelo Island; and

WHEREAS, a severe erosion of Geechee Gullah culture and heritage has continued to the point that it is in a state of near extinction; and

Creating the Joint Study Committee on the Preservation of Sapelo Island; and for other Purposes.
WHEREAS, extensive, unregulated commercial development of the island, without ethical review or oversight, threatens not only the Geechee Gullah people but also the island’s beautiful natural resources and wildlife; and
WHEREAS, such development has been for the personal, private gain of the few at the expense of all of Georgia’s citizens; and
WHEREAS, title to lands of the island is a matter of legal dispute, and the state’s current ownership may be the result of unjust enrichment at the expense of the Geechee Gullah people; and
WHEREAS, the island has an abundance of historical property that is in need of state funding for renovation and promotion as tourist attractions; and
WHEREAS, much of the island is composed of natural areas which need to be protected as habitats for wildlife, nesting birds, and turtles in order to protect the beauty and tranquility of this special state resource; and
WHEREAS, many concerned citizens, environmentalist groups, business and property owners, and the original Geechee Gullah residents are gravely concerned about the future of this beautiful island and the survival of its native people; and
WHEREAS, before it is too late and the important environmental and historical heritage of the island is lost forever, the State of Georgia needs to immediately undertake an extensive study and proposal development regarding the funding, governance, and future of Sapelo Island.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA that there is created the Joint Study Committee on the Preservation of Sapelo Island to be composed of eight members, consisting of four members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and four Members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one of the four members from the House and the President of the Senate shall designate one of the four members from the Senate to serve as cochairpersons of the committee. The committee shall meet at the call of the cochairpersons.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall undertake a study of the conditions, needs, issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any actions or legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate. The committee shall review the following matters in particular:

1. Building codes and zoning codes that may be needed for the protection of the environment and the historical heritage of the island;
2. The need for ethical oversight, ethical statutory provisions, and conflict of interest restrictions relating to the governing and development of the island;
3. The need for greater input or control in the public policy and governance of the island by the residents;
4. The fairness and equality of property tax evaluations and assessments; and
5. Access by and fair representation of the Geechee Gullah people in government public policy affecting the island.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may be deem necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution. The legislative members of the committee shall receive the allowances authorized for legislative members of interim legislative committees but shall receive the same for not more than five days unless additional days are authorized. The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from the funds appropriated to the House of Representatives and Senate. In the event the committee makes a report of its findings and recommendations, with suggestions for proposed legislation, if any, such report shall be made on or before December 31, 2012. The committee shall stand abolished on December 31, 2012.
A RESOLUTION

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3 barrier island and the home of important endangered wildlife, treasured historical structures,
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WHEREAS, before it is too late and the important environmental and historical heritage of the island is lost forever, the State of Georgia needs to immediately undertake an extensive study and proposal development regarding the funding, governance, and future of Sapelo Island.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that there is created the Senate Preservation of Sapelo Island Study Committee to be composed of seven members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate. The President of the Senate shall designate one of the members to serve as chairperson of the committee. The committee shall meet at the call of the chairperson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall undertake a study of the conditions, needs, issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any actions or legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate. The committee shall review the following matters in particular:

1. Building codes and zoning codes that may be needed for the protection of the environment and the historical heritage of the island;
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(5) Access by and fair representation of the Geechee Gullah people in government public policy affecting the island.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution. The members of the committee shall receive the allowances authorized for legislative members of interim legislative committees but shall receive the same for not more than five days unless additional days are authorized. The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from the funds appropriated to the Senate. In the event the committee makes a report of its findings and recommendations, with suggestions for proposed legislation, if any, such report shall be made on or before December 31, 2012. The committee shall stand abolished on December 31, 2012.
### Sapelo Island Ferry Schedule

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Privately Owned & Operated Lodging on Sapelo Island, Georgia

Comyam’s Campground, Maurice Bailey, (912) 266-4848, Marsh-side camping and tours. P.O. Box 7 Sapelo Island, GA 31327

The Wallow, Cornelia Bailey, (912) 485-2206, Cottage and lodge rentals and dining opportunities. Bicycle Rentals. General Delivery, Sapelo Island, GA 31327.

The Weekender, Nancy and Caesar Banks, (912) 485-2277 Lodging, bicycle rentals, and dining opportunities. PO Box 21, Sapelo Island, GA 31327

Mike Lewis, Home rental, (912) 485-2318, or 262-6950. Lodging, with vehicle, charter fishing and bicycle rentals.

Gibb Walker – Cottage Rental, (912) 429-0187. Cottage for two.

Sapelo Birdhouse Cottages – (404) 660-4075. Two bedroom, one bath cottage rentals.

Individual and Private Tours

Spirit of Sapelo Tours, Inc, Maurice E. Bailey, (912) 266-4848, Bus tours also available. General Delivery, Sapelo Island, GA 31327.

The Weekender, Nancy and Caesar Banks, (912) 485-2277 Individual and private tours, bicycle rentals. PO Box 21, Sapelo Island, GA 31327


Fran Drayton, (912) 485-2172, Individual and private tours, General Delivery, Sapelo Island, GA 31327.

Sapelo Island Baskets, Yvonne J. Grovner, (912) 485-2262. Hand made sweet grass baskets.

All Requests to go to Sapelo Island must be made 48 hours ahead of time and two weeks notice for groups over ten (10).