

Hays County Historical Commission

Minutes of March 25, 2021

The meeting of the Hays County Historical Commission was held March 25th virtually on ZOOM. Kate Johnson, chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm (CST).

Roll Call

A quorum was present at roll call.

Present: Cynthia Allison, Delbert Bassett, Marie Bassett, Eric Beckers, Linda Coker, Anthony Davis, Robert Frizzell, Jeremy Garrett, Patrick Gibson, Cindy Hunter (arrived shortly after roll call), Kate Johnson, Lila Knight, Jo Landon, Cindy Meyer, Ralph Meyer, Ryan Patrick Perkins, Sally Ramirez, Trish Randow, Alison Tudor, Vanessa Westbrook

Absent (all excused): Jennifer Pack, Daphne Tenorio, Willie Tenorio, Rosina Valle,
Guests: Sharon Lippke

Citizens Comments

Anita Collins previously notified Vanessa Westbrook she would be participating in Citizens Comments, but she failed to appear.

Approval of Minutes

Patrick Gibson made a motion to accept the minutes from February 25, 2021. The motion was seconded by Linda Coker and passed unanimously.

Approval of Proposed Revisions to 2018 Bylaws

Chair Johnson stated our last revisions to the Bylaws were made in 2018. The Texas Historical Commission recommends that each county historical commission review their bylaws every two years. The HCHC has been working on these proposed revisions since last summer, and we thoroughly discussed and reviewed them with all the members of the HCHC at our meeting last October. These revisions are necessary to bring our Bylaws into compliance with current state and federal laws, including the Rules and Regulations of the Texas Historical Commission.

On March 7th, Chair Johnson appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to review all the comments and make any additional changes. This committee was composed of all of our current officers and former officers. (Kate Johnson, Trisha Randow, Linda Coker, Lila Knight and Daphne Tenorio). The proposed revisions to the Bylaws were emailed to all of our HCHC members on March 15th to allow everyone at least 10 days to read and review them.

The Proposed revisions to the Bylaws will be submitted to the Hays County Commissioners Court for their final approval.

Delbert Bassett moved to accept the proposed revisions to the Bylaws and the motion was seconded by Lila Knight. Chair Johnson opened the item for discussion.

Knight made a correction to Article VI, Section 5 to clarify the responsibilities of the Cemetery Committee. Eric Beckers made a suggestion that the word “applications” to the last sentence of Article VI, Section 4. There was no further discussion.

A roll call vote was taken on the proposed revisions:

Voting Aye: Cynthia Allison, Delbert Bassett, Marie Bassett, Eric Beckers, Linda Coker, Anthony Davis, Robert Frizzell, Jeremy Garrett, Patrick Gibson, Cindy Hunter (arrived shortly after roll call), Kate Johnson, Lila Knight, Jo Landon, Cindy Meyer, Ralph Meyer, Ryan Patrick Perkins, Sally Ramirez, Trish Randow, Alison Tudor, Vanessa Westbrook.

Voting Nay: No one.

The proposed revisions to the Bylaws passed unanimously 20-0.

Announcements

Chair Johnson announced that HCHC member Alison Tudor was awarded the Community Volunteer of the Year by the Heritage Association of San Marcos. All applauded her efforts. Linda Coker added that the Heritage Association of San Marcos, 48 years in existence, awarded her this award for her wonderful work on the Facebook page, San Marcos Historic Photos, which has contributed immeasurably to documenting the history of San Marcos.

Officers' Reports

There were no officers' reports.

Committee Reports

African-American Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Vanessa Westbrook stated the committee met March 17th. They reviewed and approved the description of the committee. Work on the review of the strategic plan is ongoing.

Chair Westbrook discussed all of the events that occurred to celebrate Black History Month. A countywide calendar of events for Black History Month was listed on our website.

Plans for the Juneteenth celebration are underway. A calendar of events for countywide Juneteenth Celebrations will be listed on our website. The committee decided to do a countywide essay contest for students. She discussed this idea with three teachers. We will prepare a

description of the contest and guidelines by the end of April. Plans are also underway for a program where the students can publicly read their essays.

The next meeting of the committee will be April 14th.

Cemetery Committee

Committee Chair Jo Landon reported the committee held a meeting March 20th at the San Vicente Cemetery. Twelve people were in attendance. They completed an inventory of all the gravestones since 1989 to bring the existing inventory up to date. The Historic Texas Cemetery application is underway and the adjacent landowners have been officially notified. A deed will be recorded soon. She noted that all the participants enjoyed the meeting tremendously.

Certified Local Government Committee

Committee Chair Lila Knight stated the March 19th meeting was cancelled due to the dramatic weather. The meeting will be rescheduled in the next couple of weeks.

Knight took the “Preservation Boot Camp” training required for CLG Chairs and successfully received her certification on March 16th. She found it to be quite useful and informative. Although not required, she suggested the other members of the committee also take the training. She will send the information to all the members of the HCHC in case they are interested in the information provided.

Courthouse Committee

Committee Chair Linda Coker announced the museum is still closed due to Covid-19.

ArtSquared will be holding their event again and the committee will discuss our participation in it at the March committee meeting. The committee is monitoring the proposed installation of security cameras inside the Courthouse and on the exterior of the Courthouse. The initial proposal did not address the historic designation of the building, which will require comments by the Texas Historical Commission. The Commissioners Court will be taking bids for the project in the future.

Chair Coker applauded the efforts of Alison Tudor for organizing the HCHC records in our office located in the Courthouse.

The next meeting of the committee will be held March 27th at 10:00 am.

Hispanic Heritage Committee

No Report. (Vanessa reported that a meeting of the committee will be held March 30th at 7:00 pm)

Historical Marker Committee

Committee Chair Marie Bassett has been waiting for several months for a response on the committee's edit suggestions for the marker texts from THC for two markers, La Sociedad Mutualista Cuauhtémoc and the Kyle Depot. Those edits arrived unexpectedly this morning. Chair Bassett has forwarded these two marker texts to the committee for their review. The deadline for responding with any additional edits is May 9th. The texts of these two markers will be approved at the THC quarterly meeting in June before they are sent to the foundry for casting. It will be some months before the actual markers arrive in Hays County.

No changes were made to the marker text edits on the Kyle Depot, but she is asking the committee to review them carefully for errors. There were several sentences in the La Sociedad Mutualista Cuauhtémoc which THC changed. She has sent those marker texts to the Board of Cuauhtémoc Hall and the Historical Marker Committee members for their review.

Chair Bassett reported there has been no news from THC on the request for a review of the corrections submitted for the existing and damaged Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla marker. She will continue to contact the THC staff regarding this.

The Carpenter Log House (formerly a RTHL) is being prepared for its final move to a new property by a private property owner who prevented its demolition (the building was moved from its original site two years ago by a developer). The RTHL designation has been removed since the building is now relocated (the marker itself disappeared years ago). The THC Historic Sites Atlas has not yet been updated to reflect its new status. Chair Bassett will enquire about this from the THC again.

Vanessa Westbrook had suggested the Historical Marker Committee do a Webinar on the marker application process. Chair Bassett believes it would be better to post the THC Webinar on markers to our website.

The window for submitting regular historical marker applications is still open until May 15th, but no applications have yet been received. Marie and Jo will meet with a potential sponsor of a subject marker for the Peal-Pleasant Valley Cemetery.

Linda Coker commented that she recently attended a birthday party for a board member of Cuauhtémoc Hall who expressed relief that the marker process is taking so long, as they want to be able to dedicate it publicly with many people in attendance.

Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center

Committee Chair Trisha Randow regretted to inform everyone that the Depot is still closed due to the pandemic. She has been checking with area museums and the City of Kyle to see how they are planning to reopen their facilities. A meeting of the committee will be held next week to discuss this issue and to review the marker text for the Depot.

The repairs on the plumbing leak have been successfully completed and she expressed her appreciation to the Hays County staff.

Lila Knight noted that Evan Thompson of Preservation Texas had placed the Depot on Google Maps some time ago. He was notified last week that the location has received 100,000 hits.

Natural Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Delbert Bassett reported that the COVID pandemic is still restricting the activities of Natural Heritage Committee (NHC).

Chair Bassett reported that on March 5th, he made a trip to the S.M. Tracy Herbarium on the TAMU campus and met with the curator, Dale Kruse. He received a tour of the facilities and then discussed how we could assist them in obtaining some of the 1104 missing specimens of plants from Hays County. The plant specimens have not been stolen nor lost, but simply have not been collected by any botanist and given to any herbarium in the United States or world. I do not expect we will find all the missing plants but we can over time find a large portion of them.

After discussing the specimen collection topic, we discussed what standards our specimens will need to meet before they will be accepted by any herbarium. Then Mr. Kruse took me to the storage area to show me some special specimens the Tracy Herbarium holds, including a series of plant specimens collected in the Hill Country from the 1840s to the 1890s. These specimens were collected by some of the most famous early Texas botanists, such as Berlandier, Drummond, Ferdinand von Roemer, Charles Wright, and Julien Reverchon. One my bucket list items was attained when he showed me a Ferdinand Lindheimer holotype specimen of one of my favorite grasses, Lindheimer Muhly. This was the very plant he dug up September 1849.

The Natural Heritage Committee Zoom met March 11th to get to know each other better. I am excited to announce that our new members bring a lot of talent and fresh ideas. Eric Beckers is stepping out with a fast pace with his publication of a monthly paper titled, "What's Happenin' on The Hill" which highlights two Texas native plants. It not only carries identification information about the plants but also cites historical info such as how the Native Americans and settlers used the plants. The title of the newsletter refers to Beacon Hill where he lives. The newsletter is posted on our HCHC website (thanks to Vanessa). We are hoping that teachers and school children will be attracted to it. The newsletter is gaining in popularity and a group in Dallas recently requested to receive it each month (it is free of charge).

In closing, we have a great group of people and, when we escape the firm grip of the virus, we will learn a lot and have fun doing it.

Chair Johnson asked where Beacon Hill received its name. Chair Bassett explained that early aviators used the railroad tracks to navigate. By World War II, beacons were constructed on higher elevations for navigation tools and warnings. Eric added that one of his neighbors has a large concrete slab on their property that might be the site of the beacon.

Old County Jail Committee

Committee Chair Johnson reported they held a Zoom meeting March 15th. Chair Johnson will request a full-size set of the drawings for the interior restoration and a corrected budget from the architect for the committee members to review. Subsequently, we will hold a meeting with the architect to incorporate any possible changes. It may be necessary to request another grant in order to go out for bids on the interior.

Oral History Committee

Committee Chair Vanessa Westbrook stated there was no report, but the committee will meet April 15th.

Technology and Website

Vanessa Westbrook requested that everyone RSVP to the Zoom meeting by the Wednesday before our meetings. She also offered to set-up Zoom meetings for the chairs of our committees.

The quarterly report on the statistics for the website will not be available until the next meeting. The highlight on April will be the Natural Heritage Committee. The home page currently features the life of Ollie Giles. As she recently passed away, the website has received a great deal of traffic and links. Ollie was also featured on our Facebook page and has received numerous views and share.

She encouraged all members to send her their committee information for posting on the website. She does not necessarily edit the entries, but will check for errors. She also suggested that photographs should be submitted for visual interest.

Adjourn

Chair Johnson thanked everyone for attending and announced the next meeting will be April 22nd at 6:00 pm. Several members made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 pm (CST)