

Hays County Historical Commission

Minutes of April 22, 2021

The meeting of the Hays County Historical Commission was held April 22nd virtually on ZOOM. Kate Johnson, chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 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, Sally Ramirez, Trish Randow, Daphne Tenorio, Willie Tenorio, Alison Tudor, Rosina Valle, Vanessa Westbrook

Absent (all excused): Jennifer Pack, Ryan Patrick Perkins

Guests: Anita Collins

Citizens Comments

There were no citizens comments.

Approval of Minutes

Delbert Bassett made a motion to accept the minutes from March 25, 2021. The motion was seconded by Anthony Davis and passed unanimously.

Announcements

Chair Johnson announced that the HCHC will begin meeting in-person in September and perhaps before if it can be done safely for everyone.

Officers' Reports

There were no officers' reports. Secretary Knight did remind everyone to send in their volunteer hours each month.

Committee Reports

African-American Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Vanessa Westbrook stated the committee met April 14th. The committee is moving forward with plans for the Juneteenth Essay Contest (for middle school and high school students). Vanessa Westbrook is working on the description and guidelines which she will mail to committee members for their review shortly. Advertisements on the contest will be sent out May

1st. Anthony Davis has gotten plaques for both the first and second place winners (in each category). Chair Johnson investigated whether the HCHC could give monetary awards, but the Auditors Office replied no. They did advise that sponsors could. A total of \$500 has been donated for this purpose: \$400 in an anonymous cash donation and two \$50 gift cards from the Mermaid Society. The two first place winners will receive a plaque and a \$200 prize. The two second place winners will receive a plaque and a \$50 gift card. Each participant will receive a participation certificate (donated by a local educator).

Commissioner Ingalsbe has agreed to place a Resolution on the agenda regarding the Juneteenth Celebration. Westbrook is sending her a draft of the resolution.

There will be a series of events taking place throughout the county which she will report on next month. The only activity sponsored by the HCHC is the essay contest and the resolution before Commissioners Court.

Cemetery Committee

Committee Chair Jo Landon reported the Historic Cemetery application for San Vicente Cemetery is complete and has been recorded with the Hays County Clerk. Cindy Dally combined our existing inventory of the cemetery with the new information. This inventory is undergoing a final check for accuracy. A subject marker for the cemetery will be the next step.

The historic cemetery designation application for the Peal-Pleasant Valley Cemetery's Medallion plaque (with name and date) is merely awaiting for the Hays County Treasurer office to send the check to THC.

Since the passing of Ollie Giles, there is no longer a contact person for the San Marcos-Blanco Community Cemetery. Landon is awaiting the appointment of a new contact person so the information on the sign can be updated.

Certified Local Government Committee

Committee Chair Lila Knight stated no meeting was held by some minor Section 106 Reviews were dealt with administratively (no effect on historic resources). Several members of the committee have participated in the "Preservation Boot Camp" training provided by the THC. This information has been sent to all members of the HCHC as it is quite useful and informative.

Courthouse Committee

Committee Chair Linda Coker announced the museum will reopen May 8th (2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month). This reopening will be combined with the ArtSquared event on May 8th. Committee member Vanessa Westbrook has been working on a new African-American exhibit and Committee Chair Coker is completing a Tejano exhibit.

Vanessa Westbrook added that she will reopen the HCHC Office each Tuesday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm each Tuesday. She will be available to open the museum on those days as well beginning May 4th.

Chair Johnson requested that the HCHC Office door be kept open when someone is present so they can provide information to visitors to the Courthouse.

Hispanic Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Willie Tenorio reported on the results of their March committee meeting. The committee will be celebrating Cinco de Mayo with several events on Tuesday, May 4th: County Judge Becerra is sponsoring a Resolution at Commissioners Court; the Courthouse Museum will be open for people to view the new Hispanic exhibition; and they will be selling copies of the HCHC publication, Sueños y recuerdos del pasado.

Willie Tenorio invited all of the members of the HCHC to attend the activities on May 4th.

The committee is also arranging a training for committee members to attend a story weaving class. Story weaving is a method to collect oral or written histories from the public.

Historical Marker Committee

Committee Chair Marie Bassett reported that Freddie Medina and the Main Street program in San Marcos have refurbished the historical marker at the Calaboose. The before and after photographs have been posted on the HCHC website. Refurbishing of the markers is a good project for organizations.

Committee Chair Bassett thanked HCHC member Westbrook for posting the information on the HCHCH website regarding the THC Marker process. The THC deadline for receiving applications is May 15th, but the HCHC must receive applications by May 1st in order to adequately review them before they are submitted. There is additional information on the marker process on the THC website. Thus far, no applications have been received by the HCHC. But she has received information on two possible marker applications: the Peal-Pleasant Valley Cemetery marker have decided to postpone applying until next year; Henry Oles is considering applying for a marker for the Old Mill (since it is currently listed on the NRHP, the documentation is complete).

The final texts for the markers for La Sociedad Mutualista Cuauhtémoc and the Kyle Depot have been received and forwarded to the sponsors for their review. There were no changes to the Kyle Depot marker text, but there were a few edits by THC staff to the text for La Sociedad Mutualista Cuauhtémoc. She has not yet heard back from either sponsor. The deadline for responding with any additional edits is May 9th. The texts of these two markers will be approved at THC's next available quarterly meeting before they are sent to the foundry for casting. It will be some months before the actual markers arrive in Hays County.

Yet another message has been sent to THC asking about the corrections to the Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla marker. The THC may be having their historians still checking on it as it is not on the upcoming THC quarterly meeting agenda.

The text for the William B. Travis League marker has just arrived. She thanked committee member Garrett for the discovery of a typographical error.

Committee Chair Bassett has completed the Open Meetings training, received her doses of the vaccine, and attended the TSHA symposium on the Battle of San Jacinto.

Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center

Committee Chair Trisha Randow reported on the committee meeting held March 30th. The reopening of the museum will occur on May 1st, barring any spike in covid cases. The museum will observe CDC guidelines to require masks and to wipe down all high traffic surfaces. The county staff have been requested to do an heavy-duty cleaning and disinfection before the reopening. Chair Johnson volunteered to provide masks in case people forget theirs.

The museum will be open each Saturday from 10:00 to 2:00, with Sunday hours resuming as volunteers become available. She is still in need of volunteers for May 1st. HCHC members Knight and Gibson volunteered to be available on that day. There is still a need for one additional person to volunteer on May 29th.

Several new docents have volunteered and will receive training in the near future.

Natural Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Delbert Bassett reported that the committee did not hold a meeting but this Sunday (April 25th) they will be Delbert and Eric Beckers will be touring Beacon Hill with a representative of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Masks and social distancing will be observed, but it will be held entirely outdoors.

Committee members met April 6th with Connie Wierman of the Hays County Master Gardeners to do a springtime inventory of native plants at the Stagecoach Park in Buda. This task added to our native plant inventory list. The committee has been working with the Buda Parks Department on several activities: marking plants on the trails, and; a brochure with information on the plants, how they were used by Native Americans, and historical information on the Tarbox & Brown Stagecoach Line ruts in the nearby stream bed.

Members of the committee also responded to a complaint to the Commissioners Court regarding damage to the bark of trees from the Christmas lights on the Courthouse grounds. Members met on April 6th on the courthouse grounds with San Marcos City arborist, Kelly Eby; County Facilities Manager, Chris Deichmann, and; County Judge Executive Assistant, Anita Collins. They found no damage as a result of the Christmas light installation, but several other problems were discovered.

The pecan tree at the northwest corner is badly tilting approximately 35 to 40 degrees toward the street.

The pecan tree at the southwest corner is somewhat tilting, but could possible damage cars or pedestrians if it failed. This is the “Sam Houston” tree that was planted by the Daughters of the Republic. We could possible request funds from them to help stabilize the tree. Coker mentioned they should be meeting again soon (they utilize the community meeting room in the Courthouse).

The pecan tree at the southeast corner is not tilting, but it has a large cavity in the trunk that has weakened the tree.

The cedar elm tree at the northeast corner is only about 25 years old, but it has a weakened trunk and is also leaning a bit.

To the west of the north entrance to the Courthouse is a bois d’arc tree. The upper crown of this tree does not appear to be healthy.

The San Marcos City arborist, Kelly Eby, submitted a report to Anita Collins. Chris Deichmann will be getting bids for a tree servicing company. Committee Chair Bassett suggested we begin collecting pecans in case we lose any of these trees so we can preserve their continued lineage.

Committee Chair Bassett requested member Eric Beckers complete the report. He reported there had been two hikes at his property on Beacon Hill where the fruit trees were in full bloom. The group also observed some of the freeze damage, but the large agave plant is recovering well. The fourth issue of the newsletter, “What’s Happenin’ on The Hill” is now available on the HCHC website.

Old Jail Committee

No report.

Oral History Committee

Committee Chair Vanessa Westbrook reported there was no meeting held in April. She tasked all HCHC members to review the oral history section of the HCHC website and review at least three of the oral histories and report to her: which oral histories you reviewed; what you like about them; what you didn’t like.

Committee Chair Westbrook contacted the NPR staff for Story Corps and invited them to Hays County. They responded quickly and set up a time to have a more detailed conversation with her. She will get Chair Johnson involved once she learns more. She has also enquired with our webmaster if we could add a recording section where people could record stories themselves. Delbert Bassett suggested perhaps we could use Zoom for this purpose.

Technology and Website

Vanessa Westbrook reported that we currently have 898 followers on our Facebook page (63% female and 33% male). There were 823 “likes” in the past three months with our most popular post being the Ollie Giles Memorial (2,200 people viewed it in March). The next highest response was to the Natural Heritage Committee newsletter post (April) and the third favorite was the post on Black History Month (February) In May, the Facebook page will highlight the reopening of our museums with a pinned post. Knight suggested we tie-in National Historic Preservation Month to the May post. Westbrook requested Knight submit it.

The quarterly report on the statistics for the HCHC website is not yet available. Once it is received, Westbrook will send that to the Secretary to send to all the committee members. Alison Tudor asked if more photographs could be added to the website. Westbrook requested she send the photographs to her for posting with the relevant information on each photograph.

Westbrook thanked the Historical Marker and Natural Heritage committees for submitting information for the HCHC website and requested other committees to do the same.

Adjourn

Chair Johnson thanked everyone for attending and announced the next meeting will be May 27th at 6:00 pm. Marie Bassett made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Vanessa Westbrook seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 pm (CST)