

Hays County Historical Commission

Minutes of June 24, 2021

The meeting of the Hays County Historical Commission was held June 24th at the Hays County Courthouse. This was our first in-person meeting since the pandemic. Kate Johnson, chair, called the meeting to order 5:38 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, Cindy Hunter, Kate Johnson, Lila Knight, Jo Landon, Cindy Meyer, Ralph Meyer, Ryan Patrick Perkins, Sally Ramirez, Trisha Randow, Alison Tudor, Vanessa Westbrook

Absent: Patrick Gibson, Jenny Pack, Daphne Tenorio, Willie Tenorio, Rosina Valle

Guests: Anita Collins, Mr. Ramirez

Citizens Comments

Anita Collins commented that the information on the HCHC's website regarding the meeting was incorrect and was not the same as the certified agenda posted with Hays County. She also expressed her support of both resolutions.

The following submitted written public comments. The comments were read into the public record. All were in support of the two resolutions encouraging the preservation of both the Dunbar Home Economics Building and the Naomi Cephas House. Their written comments are on file with the secretary of the HCHC:

1. Kama Davis
2. Jonafa Banbury (representing the Dunbar Heritage Association)
3. Dr. Skyller Walkes (representing the Board of the Calaboose African American Museum)
4. Shetay Ashforrd-Hanserd
5. Amy Meeks
6. Glynis Christine
7. Joanna Tegtmeyer
8. Linda Rodriguez
9. Robin Blackburn
10. Jennifer Katz

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11. Ralph Merriweather
12. Dr. Ann Du Pont
13. Jillian Bliss
14. Michele Frazier
15. Ida Miller
16. Tom Wassenich

Approval of Minutes

Ryan Patrick Perkins made a motion to accept the minutes from May 27, 2021. The motion was seconded by Linda Coker and passed unanimously.

Resolution in Support of the Naomi Cephas House at 218 MLK Street in San Marcos

A significant historic house is threatened with demolition in the Dunbar Historic District (locally designated by the city). This house is an outstanding example of early 20th century vernacular architecture and is associated with the Ulysses Cephas family. In addition, the recent survey of San Marcos lists it as a high priority property individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Delbert Bassett read the Resolution into the public record (the resolution is attached to these minutes).

Jo Landon made a motion to approve the resolution and Delbert Bassett seconded the motion. Ryan Patrick Perkins abstained from the vote as he serves as the chair of the San Marcos Historic Preservation Commission and the COA application for a demolition permit is scheduled to come before his commission in August. The motion passed 18-0-1.

Resolution in Support of the Preservation of the Dunbar Home Economics Building, San Marcos

The Dunbar Home Economics Building is a locally designated landmark by the City of San Marcos. The building is suffering from lack of maintenance and is in need of restoration. Lila Knight informed the HCHC she has volunteered to write a National Register nomination for the Dunbar Home Economics Building. Linda Coker added that Frances Stovall, former president of the San Marcos Heritage Association and former chair of the HCHC, had previously tried to get the building re-listed after it was mistakenly removed from the National Register after a fire destroyed the main Dunbar School building. Mrs. Stovall was so confident the THC would act, that she had dedication brochures printed for the event. Anita Collins requested to make a comment: Ms. Collins added that the building had been moved from the West Palm School.

Ryan Patrick Perkins read the Resolution into the public record (the resolution is attached to these minutes).

Ryan Patrick Perkins made a motion to approve the resolution and Trisha Randow seconded the motion. The motion passed 19-0.

Announcements

Chair Johnson announced that Trisha Randow will be moving to Denton in the late fall. She has done an outstanding job as the chair of the Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center and received a round of applause by the members. Johnson announced that following the departure of Trisha Randow in the fall, Patrick Gibson will serve as the new chair.

Chair Johnson announced that the HCHC will not hold any meetings in July or August. She encouraged all committees to continue meeting over the summer.

The next meeting will be held on September 23rd in Driftwood. Details will be forthcoming.

Committee Reports

Kyle Depot Committee

Committee Chair Trisha Randow reported 24 visitors thus far during June. There is concern that moving Kyle Market Day to Gregg-Clarke Park will have an impact on our visitor numbers. There has always been more visitors during Market Day because of the additional activities downtown.

The Kyle Depot Committee is excited to have Anthony Davis working on making 360 degree video of the Depot on our website. She thanked him for all his work.

In addition, Hays County staff installed soaker hoses in the flower beds this week and fixed the lights on the ceiling fans.

Chair Randow wanted to remind everyone that all volunteers are welcome. It is not necessary to be a member of the Hays County Historical Commission to participate as a docent at the Kyle Depot.

Marie Bassett commented that Trisha Randow has been an exemplary leader for the Kyle Depot. Marie has observed her talents and her comprehensive knowledge of the Depot.

Delbert Bassett took the opportunity to make an impromptu presentation to Trisha of a satirical railroad travel poster advertising "Ski Texas." He reminded the members that the Texas boundaries once extended far enough to encompass Aspen and many other of the popular ski resorts.

African American Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Vanessa Westbrook reported that the committee met June 22 at 5:30 pm at the Kyle Depot. The next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

The members of the committee reported on their activities on Juneteenth, including attending the Proclamation issued by the Hays County Commissioners Court; Anthony Davis and Vanessa Westbrook participated on the City of Kyle “Peace and Progress” event; Eric Beckers attended the Juneteenth celebration in Buda; and Delbert Bassett, Sally Ramirez, Vanessa Westbrook, and Ryan Patrick Perkins attended the Juneteenth celebration in San Marcos. (HCHC members Lila Knight, Kate Johnson and Linda Coker also attended the San Marcos Juneteenth event.)

The committee members discussed writing more articles to the African American History section of the HCHC website.

The African American Heritage Committee voted unanimously to support the Resolutions for the preservation of the Dunbar Home Economics Building and the Naomi Cephas House in the Dunbar Historic District.

Cemetery Committee

Committee Chair Jo Landon reported on a field trip taken by the committee on June 3rd to see the grave of Sara Rector in Mountain City; the Nanny Porter grave at Niece Equipment (IH 35 frontage road); and the Winters Cemetery (Leisure Woods Subdivision). It rained very hard that day and the low water crossing to the Ireland Cemetery in Bear Creek was impassable. There will probably be another field trip in the near future.

Chair Landon is working with Vanessa Westbrook to update the Cemetery section of the HCHC website.

Historical Marker Committee

Committee Chair Marie Bassett reported that the committee held an in-person meeting on May 12th at the Kyle Depot with all but two members in attendance. The committee is working on photographing and inventorying RTHL markers. This will overlap with photographing RTHL and Subject markers from the end of the second marker book (2002) to the present. In the lull until the next marker window, the committee will be concentrating on this project.

Chair Bassett gave an update on the status of pending markers:

Kyle Depot — The marker is signed off and awaiting final approval at THC’s July quarterly board meeting.

La Sociedad Mutualista Cuauhtémoc — This marker was approved by Cuauhtémoc Hall Board. The committee has signed off on the text and is awaiting approval at THC’s July quarterly board meeting.

William B. Travis League — We are awaiting THC’s response to the submitted edits.

Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla — The final edits, along with suggestions from the Welder family (Portilla descendants who sponsored the original marker) were sent to THC. We are awaiting THC's response.

Alba Ranch — The suggestions sent by Alba descendants are being shared with THC. We are awaiting THC's response.

Riverhead Farm — This marker is now in place on Lime Kiln Road. Sponsor Ann Dupont would like to work with us on a dedication ceremony after on-going roadwork is completed.

Application forms for the Undertold Markers Program will be available online in August. The window for the marker applications runs from October 1 through November 15. Applications can be submitted directly to THC or come through the HCHC Historical Marker Committee (this bears more weight). If applications are submitted through the HCHC, the application should be submitted to Marie by November 1st so the committee will have an adequate time to review it. The minimum requirement for the application is a statement describing the subject in 250 words or less which means that, if accepted, a properly researched narrative has then to be presented. If such a narrative is already available, that can be submitted with the application, thus cutting down the work after the fact. The normal acceptance rate for undertold markers is 15-20%, so they are very competitive.

Natural Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Delbert Bassett reported that due to medical restrictions, not much was accomplished during the past month. Eric Beckers' June edition of "What's Happenin' on the Hill" was published and is available on the HCHC website.

Chair Bassett reported the committee will be planning an "out of county" field trip to the S. M. Tracy Herbarium on the TAMU campus in either July or August. During 100^o months, the Natural Heritage Committee will be in defilade, i.e. in air conditioned rooms.

Report on Technology and Website

Secretary Lila Knight made the report for Vanessa Westbrook, who left the meeting early to attend another meeting. Knight reported there are no new statistics for the HCHC website. Updates have been made to the following sections: Cemetery; Natural Heritage; and the "highlight" section on the home page.

Vanessa Westbrook reported that we currently have 886 followers on our Facebook page. There were 505 people who clicked on our Facebook posts during June and 137 clicked on our ZOOM pictures.

Vanessa requests that HCHC members write a historical article for one of the website sections. Historic photographs will enhance the content of any articles. Articles should be edited and “camera ready.” There will be electronic formatting done to aid the electronic posting.

Adjourn

Delbert Bassett made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ralph Meyer seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:31 pm (CST)

Submitted by Lila Knight, Secretary

Resolution in Support of the Preservation of
the Naomi Cephas House
at 218 MLK Street in San Marcos

WHEREAS, A demolition request has been submitted to the City of San Marcos for the Cephas House located at 218 MLK, and

WHEREAS, this property was purchased by Ulysses Cephas, a renowned leader of the African American community in San Marcos, and remained in the Cephas Family for more than forty years, and

WHEREAS, the home was occupied by Naomi Wade Cephas, the daughter of Ulysses Cephas, and is located directly across the street from the home of Ulysses Cephas from which he could view his grandchildren in the front yard, and

WHEREAS, this early 20th century house is an outstanding example of vernacular architecture and is classified as a high priority property in the “My Historic SMTX Historic Resources Survey” (2019), and

WHEREAS, this historic house is located in the Dunbar Historic District, the only surviving African American Freedom Colony in Hays County with surviving buildings, and

WHEREAS, since the Dunbar Historic District was designated in 2003, over 25% of the buildings within the district have been demolished while the other six historic districts in San Marcos have witnessed no demolitions, and

WHEREAS, preservation matters to all communities and should reflect the diversity of the entire history of Hays County,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hays County Historical Commission vehemently opposes the demolition of this highly significant African American resource in the Dunbar Historic District.

Resolution in Support of the Preservation of the African American Home Economics Building in San Marcos

WHEREAS, the Dunbar Home Economics Building is the only surviving African American school building in Hays County, and

WHEREAS, this property is now owned by the City of San Marcos and is designated a Local Historic Landmark by the City of San Marcos and

WHEREAS, the Home Economics building was once a part of the campus of the Dunbar School during the era of segregation and is the only surviving property following the tragic fire of 1986 that destroyed the larger school building, only three years after the school's listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and

WHEREAS, the Home Economics building is representative of the implementation of vocational education in Texas following passage of the Smith-Hughes Act by the 64th Congress in 1917 and encompasses the character defining features of a "cottage" type of home economics building recommended by both federal and state boards of education, and

WHEREAS, the Dunbar Home Economics Building is classified as a high priority property in the "My Historic SMTX Historic Resources Survey" (2019), and

WHEREAS, the Dunbar Home Economics Building, because of its architectural and historic significance, should be restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties under either the Standards for Preservation or the Standards for Restoration, and

WHEREAS, preservation matters to all communities and should reflect the diversity of the entire history of Hays County,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hays County Historical Commission supports the restoration and preservation of the Dunbar Home Economics Building, and recommends that this resolution be approved by the entire membership of the.