

Hays County Historical Commission

Minutes of September 23, 2021

The meeting of the Hays County Historical Commission was held September 23rd at the historic Rogers House, a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. Kate Johnson, chair, called the meeting to order at 6:17 pm (CST).

Roll Call

A quorum was present at roll call.

Present: Cynthia Allison, Delbert Bassett, Marie Bassett, Linda Coker, Anthony Davis, Robert Frizzell, Jeremy Garrett, Hoot Gibson, Kate Johnson, Lila Knight, Jo Landon, Cindy Meyer, Ralph Meyer, Ryan Patrick Perkins, Sally Ramirez, Trisha Randow, Rosina Valle

Absent: Eric Beckers, Cindy Hunter, Jenny Pack, Daphne Tenorio, Willie Tenorio, Alison Tudor, Vanessa Westbrook

Citizens attending: Denton Ragland, Sarah Ragland, Joe Ramirez, Elaine Jacobs, Carlotta McLean

Citizens Comments

Elaine Jacobs said she was attending the meeting tonight as she has a historic wagon road on her property located north of Dripping Springs. She has been doing research on the road, but has exhausted her resources and would like the help of the Hays County Historical Commission.

Approval of Minutes

Ryan Patrick Perkins made a motion to accept the minutes, as corrected and amended by the Secretary, from June 24, 2021. The motion was seconded by Jo Landon and passed unanimously.

Announcements

Chair Johnson made the following announcements:

The chair introduced our hosts for the evening, Denton and Sarah Ragland, who have graciously shared their historic home with us.

Johnson gladly announced the appointment of Ryan Patrick Perkins as the new chair of the Old County Jail Committee.

On August 5th, the San Marcos Historic Preservation Commission denied the request for the demolition of the Naomi Cephas Wade House. We are not certain what will happen next, but will keep you updated.

The City of San Marcos has received a grant in the amount off \$30,000 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for the preparation of National Register nominations for 3 buildings: Dunbar Home Economics Building; Ulysses Cephas House, and the Calaboose African American History Museum. Each of these buildings is owned by the City of San Marcos.

Preservation Texas also has received a National Park Service grant for \$750,000 to document and nominate to the National Register rural African-American properties in Texas.

This past Tuesday, the Commissioners Court passed a Proclamation proclaiming September 15 through October 15 as National Hispanic Heritage Month. There was a great turn-out in support of this proclamation. Rosina Valle and Linda Coker have put together a display in the rotunda focusing on the contributions of the San Marcos GI Forum. I encourage everyone to take a look at it.

Chair Johnson reported that this past Monday, she and many others attended the San Marcos School Board meeting. The Board of Trustees is considering selling the Southside School Building, a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. This is the building that houses Centro. A number of people spoke against the sale, and the board voted to postpone the item. Centro was Ofelia Vasquez-Philo's dream and she will keep everyone informed of what happens in the future.

Chair Johnson thanked all the members who attended various types of historic preservation training over the summer. She urged everyone to keep up the good work.

Chair Johnson informed the members, with deep regrets, that Linda Allen, our caterer for so many years, is closing her restaurant and retiring. She will no longer be catering our meetings.

Our next meeting will be October 28th in Buda.

Committee Reports

African American Heritage Committee

Committee Member Marie Bassett made the report in the absence of Vanessa Westbrook. A few members attended the AYA virtual symposium this summer (sponsored by the Texas Purple Hull Pea Festival non-profit). Marie stated she and Sally Ramirez attended the event, and Marie has written up a summary of the symposium. She will be happy to share her summary with anyone on HCHC. The symposium focused on Freedmen's Colonies.

Marie also did some research on Naomi Cephas and her family; if any member of HCHC is interesting in knowing more, please contact Marie. Marie also has been researching the slaves and freed African American families who lived in North Hays County. This research is ongoing.

Vanessa Westbrook, Chair of the African American Heritage Committee, would like to thank her committee members for their intellectual skills and resourcefulness over the past months.

Cemetery Committee

Committee Chair Jo Landon reported that she worked with Timothy Vandevorde, Operations Superintendent for the Hays County Transportation Department, to get Cementerio del Rio properly maintained. A new entrance sign to the cemetery from the new FM 110 was installed.

Jo Landon also stated she had received a check from Jim Witliff to pay for the marker for the Peal-Pleasant Valley Historic Texas Cemetery Marker.

The ongoing maintenance of the Byrd Owen-Payne Cemetery is being accomplished with R. Gomez.

Courthouse Museum Committee

Committee Chair Linda Coker announced that the Mermaid Society festivities will begin this Saturday, October 25th. Hundreds of people, if not thousands, are expected to attend the parade followed by additional events on the Courthouse grounds. Linda will need as many people who can volunteer to help with keeping the Courthouse Museum open during the day (will be open until 8:00 pm) and to answer questions. The Hays County Health Department will also be using our meeting room for a vaccination clinic.

Linda thanked Rosina Valle and the members of the Hispanic Heritage Committee for the great display of artifacts, documents and photographs focusing on the San Marcos Chapter of the GI Forum. Work is ongoing on the display case owned by the Hays County Veterans Affairs Office.

The office of the Hays County Historical Commission has received many complaints from people concerning the use of the Courthouse grounds as a “dog park” by the residents of the new downtown apartment complex. Hays County Facilities has ordered signs warning people to pick up after the dogs and Linda contacted the apartment manager who will send an email to all residents.

Hays County has taken bids on the Christmas lighting of the Courthouse and the grounds. Four bids have been received ranging from \$30,000 to \$80,000. Anita Collins, executive assistant to the County Judge, said this is principally for the lighting of the trees only. The bids will be considered on the Commissioners Court agenda October 5th. Ms. Collins said the inside of the courthouse would be decorated but probably just the roofline of the Courthouse building to have Christmas lights. It is unclear if the decorations purchased by the HCHC over the years will be utilized.

The Courthouse Museum has had the usual traffic. We have also received numerous phone calls enquiring on people’s history, particularly cemetery questions.

Main Street of San Marcos will be holding a fall concert series on the Courthouse grounds every Thursday in October. We will be keeping the Courthouse Museum open if we can have an adequate number of volunteers.

Linda attended the state conference for Main Street Advisory Boards in Seguin. One of the events was a tour of the Magnolia Hotel where Jack C. Hays married Susan Calvert. They have an early photograph of her and Ms. Coker was able to negotiate a trade of copies for an older photograph the HCHC has. They also said they had additional photographs of Jack C. Hays.

Kyle Railroad Depot Committee

Committee Chair Trisha Randow reported that the number of visitors to the Depot over the summer was down from previous years. This is probably due to a combination of the resurgence of Covid and the City of Kyle moving all of their monthly activities to Gregg-Clarke Park while they are redesigning the historic downtown square (Mary Kyle Hartson Park).

For the Love of Go sponsored one of their walks from the Depot to Gregg Park on September 4th. We had 15 people, plus 5 pets show up to participate in the walk. Hoot Gibson is working with the Kyle Police Department on one of their events. Will tell you more when we finalize the plan.

Anthony Davis continues to be a great asset to the Depot. I have contacted several of Anthony's professors to see if other students might be interested in working with us in the Depot or the Courthouse Museum. Chair Randow asked Anthony to stand up and he received a round of applause.

We will be meeting soon to begin planning for Halloween and Christmas events at the Depot.

Hoot Gibson announced that he was working with the Kyle Police Department on the National Night Out evening to be held October 6th. They requested the use of the park next to the Depot, but the VFW (across the street) offered to hold a bar-b-q for participants. The Depot will be open, however, for anyone who would like to visit.

Hispanic Heritage Committee

Rosina Valle gave the committee report in the absence of Chair Willie Tenorio. The exhibit on the San Marcos Chapter of the GI Forum has been completed. Currently there is only one display case available for highlighting Hispanic history so additional space is necessary.

The committee's next project is a subsequent volume of *Sueños y recuerdos del pasado* which would be expanded to include the rest of Hays County. She encouraged everyone to reach out to residents for ideas on what subjects they would like to see included in the next volume. Vanessa Westbrook attended this particular meeting.

The committee would like to do an altar display for Dia de los Muertos in the Courthouse rotunda. Courthouse Museum Committee Chair Linda Coker was very excited by this idea and suggested that a table could be set up for just this purpose.

Historical Marker Committee

Committee Chair Marie Bassett reported the summer months, between marker windows, have been quiet ones. Committee meetings were slated for July and August, but the latter was cancelled because of lack of a quorum.

Sadly, The Old Mill, HCHC's only marker application this Spring, was turned down by THC. The reason given was "lack of architectural integrity." The sponsor has written to THC to ask for guidance in reapplying again next year.

The Undertold Marker applications are now online, with the window opening on October 1st. All known prospective applicants have been given the necessary information and guidance. Marie attended, by Zoom, an undertold marker webinar on 23 July. All committee members were notified and also given the link to the video after the fact. Marie is signed up for a webinar on marker-chair responsibilities on September 24.

Jo Landon, as Cemetery chair, has been given money by a prospective applicant to cover the cost of a future Historical Cemetery Marker. The application cannot be submitted until next spring. As there is no guarantee that it will be successful, this is a practice that should be discouraged.

The latest edit for the William B. Travis League marker was received from THC last week and is currently being scrutinized by the marker committee and the sponsors.

Natural Heritage Committee

Committee Chair Delbert Bassett reported that the Natural Heritage Committee did not accomplish much over the last two summer months due to the harsh weather and most of their activities are conducted outside. The weather prevented many field trips.

A planned tour of the herbarium at Texas A&M University was not possible due to the organization of transportations.

Chair Johnson requested Delbert Bassett and Eric Beckers to view an area of Roy Creek in the northwest corner of Hays County upon the request of the property owner. There was once a stagecoach stop in the area and the canyon is unique as having not been touched by man to alter its natural state.

The Chair, along with Eric Beckers, has been working with the City of Buda at the Stagecoach Park to do plant surveys and identification and other activities (along with the Hays County Master Naturalists). A grant has been received to create a coloring book of plants and birds for third graders. Bassett felt this could be a great project for other areas as well, such as Kyle. And it could also be incorporated as a project for the Depot, Courthouse Museum, and Old Jail Museum in the future. Educating youth to the importance of our environment and history would be a worthwhile project. He suggested we might seek grant funds for these type of projects in the future.

Old Hays County Jail Committee

The newly appointed chair of the committee, Ryan Patrick Perkins, gave the report. The committee met July 8th with the architects and requested an updated budget and a phased plan for the restoration of the interior and the grounds. A subsequent meeting on July 23 with the architects included a review of the construction documents. The committee is pleased that the

architects were able to reduce their proposed budget. But committee members were not happy with the overall layout of the site plan, the location of the HVAC (both interior and exterior), and the location of the bathrooms.

The committee has been awaiting a response from the architects which former committee chair Johnson delivered to the new chair this evening.

Report on Technology and Website

There was no report due to Vanessa Westbrook's medical leave. We wish her the best.

Adjourn

Delbert Bassett made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ryan Patrick Perkins seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm (CST)

Submitted by Lila Knight, Secretary