



Travis County Historical Commission

The regular meeting of the Travis County Historical Commission (TCHC) was held on Wednesday, September 9, 2015. Commission Chair Bob Ward called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and declared a quorum present.

Attendance: Present were David White, Bob Perkins, Margarine Beaman, Marty Moulthrop, Vonnys Rice-Gardner, Rosemary Morrow, Larry Oaks, Nora Jackson, May Schmidt, Dan Hickox, Barry Hutcheson, Shawn Malone, and Bob Ward. Marjorie Alford, Jeannette Cook, Patti Hansen, Adrienne Rison-Isom, David Peyton, and Teri Flack were absent.

Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting on June 10 carried unanimously.

Introduction of Guests: Bobby Cervantes visited this meeting.

Report from the Chair

1. The Chair updated the Commission on the grant to digitize Frank Brown's Annals and make them available online (see Action Item below).
2. The Chair reported that Bobby Cervantes's application to join the TCHC is pending.
3. Richard Overton, the oldest living veteran of World War II, went on a field trip with the Chair to the site of the freedmen's colony of St. Mary's on the Travis-Bastrop county line.
4. Efforts to involve Preservation Austin in the plan to preserve the Sneed Mansion at 1801 Nelms Drive were discussed; the Chair reported on meetings over the past 2-3 weeks to this end. Can some of the ruins be salvaged, or is the only option left to save the story, not the building?
5. The Chair revisited the question of buying a flag or table drape with a TCHC logo and/or Travis County Seal on it. Investigations into the options will continue.
6. There's been no breakthrough on efforts to visit the Camp Terry site to document the history there.

7. Travis County officials are said to be seeking TCHC input and feedback regarding the Palm School building. It was noted that the local Swedish community would like to see the full name of Swante Palm restored to the signage at the building.
8. The Chair reported on plans for Travis County to apply for a major grant from the Texas Historical Commission to rehab and restore the historic Heman Sweatt Courthouse. A letter of support will be drafted with a deadline in December.
9. Inquiries from Marilyn McLeod, the president of the Manchaca Onion Creek Historical Association (MOCHA), were discussed. She had written to advise that the property where the historic Dodson House stands has been sold. The home is known as “It’s About Thyme” nursery today and is located at 11726 Manchaca Road. The family that runs the nursery has until December to move their business and the property owner sold the old home to the nurseryman for \$1. It would have to be moved to a new location and its future is in question. The expense associated with moving the home was discussed, as was possible relocation options – Pioneer Farm, maybe? Or perhaps other locations would be more appropriate.
10. The November meeting of the TCHC will be moved up one week, to the 4th, to avoid conflict with Veterans Day on November 11, which would have been the normal meeting date.

Action Items

1. A motion to authorize a \$100 honorarium for Travis County History Day speakers was made by Barry Hutcheson, seconded by Rosemary Morrow, and approved.
2. Regarding the grant to digitize Frank Brown’s Annals and make them available online, a motion to authorize spending TCHC funds to supplement the grant was approved, with an amount to be determined later.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Nora Jackson reported that the taxpayer-funded portion of the TCHC budget is \$2,471, and the balance in the independent Commission account is \$4,873.67.

Research Committee

A motion was made by May Schmidt, seconded by Bob Perkins, to approve the narratives and applications for the Sparks House and the Rainey House. This motion was approved.

May Schmidt described a pending marker application for the Richland School, a one-room structure built in 1878 east of Pflugerville; she said that application would be in order, and that the narrative would follow soon.

Markers Committee

Barry Hutcheson described the dedication ceremony for the Railroad Depot/Steam Train Association marker on 3rd at Congress. The location, between two benches, incorporated into the sidewalk, is ideal. It was noted that the loudspeaker podium, purchased in 1993, might be due for replacement, as attendees found that its volume was no match for passing traffic. Mr. Hutcheson also noted that ideas for another marker related to railroad history might be appropriate at the old rail yard site east of IH-35.

Vonnye Rice-Gardner described the dedication ceremony for the Holy Cross marker as a great success, noting that TCHC Chair Bob Ward delivered well-received remarks to a packed house.

David White described maintenance performed on markers in front of the Austin History Center (1933 Public Library marker) and at the Oakwood Cemetery (Andrew Jackson Hamilton). He also described fuel line problems that, until they are repaired, keep the TCHC's auger from operating. A motion to solve the problem was approved, with specifics to be determined later.

Special Projects Committee

Marty Moulthrop noted calendar items and photographs that had been added to the TCHC web page and Facebook. There have been no new developments regarding the History of the TCHC project. Vonnye Rice-Gardner observed that there had been no ACC essay contest in 2015, but hopes that the program can be reactivated in the spring of 2016. She also described historic tours she provided with Roland Hayes. The African-American Schools report is being distributed and comments are coming back from folks in the community reading it. Larry Oaks outlined his research regarding best practices and examples in other jurisdictions related to a list of endangered historic properties in Travis County.

CLG Committee

Mr. Ward updated the TCHC membership on the Southwest survey, noting that the last houses had been completed the previous Friday. Contracts for the South-Southwest, African-American Settlement, and Mexican-American Settlement were received today, he said.

Announcements

Rosemary Morrow announced that the Save Texas History Symposium is coming up on November 14th. Bob Perkins announced that the Justice for Menchaca fundraiser is scheduled for September 24th.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Shawn Malone
Secretary