

Milam County Historical Commission Meeting
Old City Hall – Rockdale, Texas

June 6, 2022

Call to Order: Chairperson Joan Ratliff called to order the meeting of the Milam County Historical Commission on June 6, 2022, at 10:07 am. The meeting was held at the Old City Hall in Rockdale, Texas.

Attendance: The following members were in attendance: Geri Burnett, Holly Jentsch, James Bradford, Eunice Stigall, Zane Stigall, Elaine Baumann, John Pruet, Jennifer Patton, and Joan Ratliff.

Recognition of Guests: The following guests were recognized: Doug Kleypas of Cameron, Paula Sisco of Ben Arnold, Joyce Dalley, Adam Craft, and Curah and Ryan Beard.

Pledges of Allegiance: The pledges of allegiance to the American and Texas flags were led by Geri Burnett.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: The minutes were distributed by email to all members. Holly Jentsch made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting on April 4, 2022, as distributed. James Bradford seconded the motion that passed.

Approval of Treasurer's Reports: The beginning balance of the General Fund on March 1, 2022, was \$65,499.31. There was interest revenue of \$27.64 and no disbursements resulting in an ending balance on March 31, 2022, of \$65,526.95 of which \$4,000 is designated to the Rosenwald School.

The beginning balance of the Preservation Fund on March 1, 2022, was \$12,163.11. There was interest revenue of \$5.32 and no disbursements resulting in an ending balance of \$12,168.43 on March 31, 2022.

The beginning balance of the General Fund on April 1, 2022, was \$65,526.95. There was interest revenue of \$30.62 and no disbursements resulting in an ending balance on April 30, 2022, of \$65,557.57 of which \$4,000 is designated to the Rosenwald School.

The beginning balance of the Preservation Fund on April 1, 2022, was \$12,168.43. There was interest revenue of \$5.69 and no disbursements resulting in an ending balance of \$12,174.12 on April 30, 2022.

Jennifer Patton made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Reports as presented. Holly Jentsch seconded the motion that passed.

Presentation by Curah Beard on Old City Hall

Because of previous commitments at this point in the meeting instead of the conclusion, Curah Beard made the presentation about the Old City Hall project. The building was originally built in 1895. It was a true community facility including an opera house which was lost in one of the repair/improvement efforts. As part of a WPA project in 1939, the original Romanesque design was lost. In the 1950's the building housed the first county library along with the police and fire administrations. When the police administration moved to new facilities, the building was vacated. The restoration project began with the purchase of the building in 2020. To date the asbestos abatement has been completed along with some interior work. The goal for 2022-23 is to rebuild the front façade including the spires and towers. Grants and donations are being pursued.

Committee Reports

The Certified Local Government Committee (CLG) – John Pruett. The committee held its bimonthly in May. Elissa Benford shared the details of her project with the group. In addition, work and discussion continues on the currently 3 major efforts underway:

- El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail (Lynn Young is currently on the Board; Joyce Conner is also on the Board and shares her reports with the Commission),
- El Rancho Grande (Joyce Conner is the chairperson; this group has established a UTube channel to advocate for the trail. The application has been submitted to establish it for a national park architectural site.
- Freedom Colonies (Include Rosenwald Schools and currently focused on the Liberty Hill and Milano sites). Commission member, James Bradford, is a descendant of the Liberty Hill colony. John shared that Andre Roberts, Professor at Texas A&M, has moved to Virginia, but the project will continue via Texas A&M.

Other current activities involving CLG requirements include:

- Maintaining a system for surveying...protecting properties and districts of historic significance
- Maintaining/updating surveyed properties/districts inventory

Standing Committees

Cemetery Committee - Holly Jentsch shared the various activity. (monitor conditions of historical cemeteries; provide research assistance, monitor various databases):

- Prospect Cemetery – the trial for the person accused of vandalizing the cemetery has been postponed. However, descendants of people buried there continue to contribute their time to maintain it.
- Hopewell-Six Mile – various inquiries were fielded.
- Gause Historical Marker – maintained the area around the marker to keep the marker visible.
- Gause Cemetery – was cleaned up for Mother's Day and the 102nd homecoming. The cemetery is maintained by private donations.
- Flags were put on veterans' graves in Gause and Peaceful Rest Cemeteries.
- Hamilton Chapel Cemetery – completed initial survey

Continued research on various defunct roads in area as well as Native American battle site locations. Also assisted in researches from several online inquiries about graves, grave sites, property owners.

Marker Committee Lynn Young. (provide assistance and guidance to applicants for historical markers and designations; work with CLG and marker recipients in coordinating efforts to maintain markers). One new application, for Gause Baptist Church has been submitted; the submission for Gause Methodist Church is work in progress.

The Rockdale Old City Cemetery Marker Dedication has been delayed because of an error on the marker and it must be recast by the foundry. Three markers are still expected for delivery for last year's recipients.

Preservation Grants - Holly Jentsch (administers MCHC funded grants and oversees accountability of recipients). The following Preservation Grants have been awarded for 2022:

- The Kay Theater Foundation \$2700.
- Milam County Railroad Museum 4136.00
- Samuel Park Storyboard \$3000.00 (Elissa Benford shared progress on this project with the CLG committee in May)
- The 1895 Project: \$5000.00

Old Business

Bridge Park - A couple of bridges at Bridge Park will be joined by a "crucible pot and pig" donated by Alcoa. Work with various agencies to make improvements are pending.

Sugar Loaf Mountain - various agencies are discussing the acquisition of Sugar Loaf Mountain to be a public park facility. Phase I is to acquire and preserve it.

New Business

Future Meetings. The executive committee shared suggestions for future meetings.

Announcements

Member, Mary Neely has been hospitalized but is now at home.

Scheduled Dates for Upcoming Milam County Historical Commission Meetings

August 1
October 3
December 5

Adjournment

There being no further business, Elaine Baumann made a motion to adjourn. Geri Burnett seconded the motion which carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Eunice Stigall, Secretary.