

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association

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January 21, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Attendees Physically Present: Joyce Conner, Bill Doolittle (Guest), Cindy Freeman, Steven Gonzales (ElCaT Executive Director), John Kisalus, Judge Bob Perkins, Elaine Sullivan (ElCaT Staff) Jesse Trevino, and Bob Ward.

Attendees Via Zoom: Frank (Chip) Briscoe, Angelica Sanchez Clark (Guest, NPS), Anthony Delgado, Ambassador Miguel Angel Fernandez de Mazarambroz (Guest), Brad Patterson (Guest, Texas Historical Commission), Dave Regan (Board President), and Carole Wendler (Guest, NPS).

Call to Order/Establishment of Quorum:

A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order by President Dave Regan. As this was the first meeting of 2023, attendees introduced themselves and spoke briefly about their backgrounds/interest in the Trail. Steven reminded everyone that only Board members could vote on issues.

Minutes from the Board meeting October 8, 2022, were considered. Bob Perkins moved to accept the minutes and Jesus Trevino seconded. The motion passed. (Later the Board approved the correction of a date misprint within the October 8 minutes.)

Appointment of Interim Secretary: With no objections, President Dave Regan appointed Joyce Conner as interim secretary until the formal election in April 2023.

Signing of Annual Board Affirmation of Service: Steven Gonzales requested that all Board members read, sign, date, and return this document, acknowledging their roles and responsibilities within the association. Due to the Pandemic this form had been overlooked. Steven would like that the affirmation be signed annually. He also referred to several informational pieces (Board of Director Responsibilities and Board of Director Guidelines) which were emailed prior to the meeting.

Dave Regan reminded Board members to consider **annual contributions** to support the Association.

Chip Briscoe gave the **Finance Committee Quarterly Report**. John Kisalus motioned to accept the financial report and Dave Regan seconded it. The motion passed.

Cindy Freeman reported on the **endowment** - the Wespeth Multiple Asset Fund had a balance of \$25,269.46 as of December 31, 2022. She explained that the fund was now performing better than the past year (-17.09%), climbing to 6.36% for a 10-year gain. Performance was due to primarily fiscal stimulus, future Federal monetary stimulus, and inflation. For our Association looking at a long-term horizon, our diversification and allocation to protected investment may be enhanced over the near-to-intermediate term.

Executive Director's Report:

Steven Gonzales presented his report with information concerning: 1) the International Interpretive Workshop; 2) TxDOT ROW Signage Initiative (TxDOT will begin to provide funding for signage installation on its own ROW); 3) Partnership for the National Trails System which had granted us \$9,9000 to help landowners become better stewards of the trail resources on their properties (Elaine Sullivan is working on a landowner workbook);

4) Community Chapter Outreach Efforts in San Antonio and New Braunfels (New Braunfels appears receptive to forming a new chapter); 5) Hike the Hill in Washington, D.C., Feb. 12-17, championing increased funding and legislation for the National Trails System (he met with representatives on both sides of the aisle); 6) City of Austin-Bergstrom Spur Trail Project to begin construction in 2025 or 2026; and 7) Bastrop Annual Meeting on April 14 – 15. He then submitted an addendum regarding the potential lease of Sugarloaf Mountain. In consideration is a 3-year lease/\$10 year for total purchase price of \$498,000 with several other terms for liability and usage. Steven will see about getting a legal document written up for Board approval.

The full report that Steven provided can be seen in the January 21, 2023, Board meeting materials.

New Business:

Discussion of Strategic Plan and Its Connection to Future Meeting Reporting. Dave Regan and Steven Gonzales discussed that our Strategic Plan laid out in a spreadsheet directly links each strategy to Activities, Timeframe for Completion, Responsible Committee, Resources Needed, and Status. This should now help each Committee to know their responsibilities along with a timeline for completion, something that apparently has not been kept up to date, except for the Finance Committee. Discussion ensued regarding the number and names of committees and past and present members. Committees are Executive, Community Relations, Development, Finance, Governance, Resource Protection, and Strategic Planning. Steven asked that Board members select at least two committees on which to sit.

Trail de Flores Community Chapter Report.

Anthony Delgado presented the Trail de Flores Chapter report. The Trail is defined in six parts. The Floresville El Camino Trail and Helton Park Trails segments are complete. The River Bend section is being finalized through the housing subdivision to avoid the golf course's driving range with completion targeted for December 2023. The chapter is working with government representatives to complete the 7-mile River Bend to Helton Park section. The section from Hwy 97 to Rancho de Las Cabras is underway using a stakeholder inventory and analysis to ensure success. A parallel project will allow hikers/bikers to transition along this portion. The final sections are still to be addressed.

Phase II of the Wilson County Sign Plan has been reviewed and forwarded. They are awaiting an update from the NPS at the next Association Board meeting. There will be some modifications for the mini exhibit signs and they are awaiting revised production/delivery schedule.

Ranchería Grande Chapter Report:

Joyce Conner reported that the Conner and Baumann families are continuing their work to establish a hiking trail across their collective properties to allow the public access to sites within the Ranchería Grande. The Baumann Swale has been cleared but still needs protection from livestock encroachment. A gate has been installed in the fence line for visitors. A small parking lot has been made using native tree logs and surfaced with road base material. Logs have been cut for two benches and one picnic table for the hilltop. A training walk will be conducted on June 3, 2023, for Texas Master Naturalists in El Camino Real Chapter to prepare them as docents for group tours. The logo is in its 4th draft and the chapter asks for approval, knowing that it does not meet current Board guidelines. The chapter is agreeable to using the Association logo with chapter name on bottom if the Board does not approve.

There was discussion on logo approval. Steven offered to propose an amendment to the guidelines that would allow the chapter to produce a modified version of the logo.

The chapter was represented at a community gathering at the Rockdale library on January 6, along with Texas Master Naturalists in El Camino Real Chapter. Both groups set up information tables at the event. From this

effort, two of our members were asked to present - one at a Master Naturalist meeting and one at a community education center.

Production of promotional items. Steven discussed getting prices on some items so that members could be identified at events/meetings. Most popular were patches, stickers, and buttons.

National Park Service – National Trails office Report:

Carole Wendler, acting superintendent for the trail, reported: 1) On an International workshop in San Antonio in December and discussed how the project would continue for multiple years. 2) It was suggested that activities for National Trails Day be shared with Em at the NPS, so that she can promote them via social media. 3) Concerning staffing, they are interviewing for a new historian; Lee Kreutzer retired from the agency; and Angelica Sanchez-Clark is the new Outreach and Partnerships Coordinator. 4) As for Helton Park, Angelica would be reaching out to SARA to complete the certification for the park. 5) An international travel itinerary is being developed for the trail. 6) Floresville's mini exhibits are in the process of being created for the Hike and Bike Trail.

Texas Historical Commission

Brad Patterson gave an update on the staffing at Presidio La Bahia and the Bush Family Home in Midland. The destroyed grass house at Caddo Mounds State Historic Site is now completed with visitor center and museum to reopen in the spring.

The TexasTimeTravel.com site has been redesigned and now contains Spanish language translation tools. New access to consumer data show that there is a great interest in sites and museums with the Hill Country Trail Region seeing 493,509 visitors Sept-Nov 2022.

Brad reported on the 2023 Real Places: Preserving Texas History Conference, on the potential demolition of the historic Luther Hotel in Palacios, the new reproduction of the lens for the Port Isabel Lighthouse, the Texas Treasure Business Award, and the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail signed into existence by President Biden. He ended by discussing the appropriations requests for FY24-25.

Meeting Adjournment:

Dave Regan motioned to adjourn the meeting and Jessie Trevino seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00 PM.