

**El Camino Real de los Tejas
National Historic Trail Association
Board Of Directors Quarterly Meeting
April 14, 2023
Annual Meeting, Bastrop State Park**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by President Dave Regan. Participating were Adam Adams, Joyce Conner, John Kisalus, Judge Bob Perkins, Dave Regan, Jesse Trevino, Bob Ward, and Executive Director Steven Gonzales. Also participating were Angelica “Cynthia” Sanchez-Clark (NPS Assistant Supervisor), Toni Mason (TPWD), Brian Deaton (National Trails Lead GIS Coordinator), and Brad Patterson (Director of Community Heritage Development, Texas Historical Commission).

A quorum was determined to be present with Cindy Freeman (Past President) and Frank (Chip) Briscoe absent. Judge Perkins moved to accept the January 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded by Bob Ward and approved.

Approval of Committee Reports

The treasurer's report was presented by Steven Gonzalez reporting for ‘Chip’ Briscoe. He explained that the approximately \$1600 in the negative column was because NPS payments were not made by March 1, so some income was not yet recorded. On the budget vs actual sheet (Profit & Loss Budget Performance), the center column is where we are and the fourth column is the actual budget. Steven also alerted us to an increase in rent from \$316 to \$364 per month in the future. He designated us to be about \$30,000 in the black. Judge Perkins moved to accept the financial report, John Kisalus seconded it, and it was adopted.

Administrative Report: Executive Directors Report (Steven Gonzales)

The *TxDOT ROW signing initiative* in which TxDOT will pay for both the Trail signs and their installation in their right-of-way is underway and affecting 40 counties. The completion goal is late April. The new initiative provides trail signage installation along state roads free of cost to each county, usually saving approximately \$1000 per sign. Laredo is finally getting their first signs due to this program.

Some discussion followed his report.

Dave Reagan mentioned that he had not seen the full plan for all of the counties. County judges might need to be notified as well as the directors of the trail association regions.

Jesse asked why signs don't go on interstates as that would educate more people about the Trail. Steven explained that he knew of only one trail sign that installing on interstates would affect and that was in Comal County. Jessie asked whether there were any that would be affected around San Antonio and Steven agreed that there may be some. It was suggested that signs could actually appear in places that we didn't even know about.

John said that we need to let the judges know they are getting free signs. Steven wanted to know how we could let everyone know (judges and county commissions) that the signs were being installed and what the signs meant. Representative Richard Raymond office has been helping with this effort and Jesse suggested that Rep. Raymond needed to know about city judges being notified and that he might need to meet with representatives in those areas. John said he would work with Jesse to work with historical commissions and state representatives on complete notification. Steven thought a letter might need to be written and that if meetings were needed, they could be done via zoom to reduce traveling. Bob Ward and Judge Perkins would like information regarding Travis County signage. Bob Ward added that he would like to see detailed maps in all the counties, as the Travis County hike and bike trails might be on top of our Trail. Bob

added that the GIS Trail map intern needs to get together with the hike and bike GIS intern to confirm paths.

John wanted to know who to contact about missing or damaged signs.

Sugarloaf Mountain lease initiative. Steven explained that he had met with Bob O'Dell, a film producer making a film about the Tonkawa Tribe. Bob had told Dave Cunningham, a land manager trying to protect Sugarloaf for many years, that the Tonkawa Tribe was possibly interested in buying/helping to buy the land from the Herzog family. Cunningham has gotten an attorney to draft a lease for us with the option to buy. A final draft was just obtained that does not reflect the landowner's recent change from a 3-year to a 2-year lease.

Some discussion ensued. John questioned whether once we have the option, do we even want to buy it. Bill thought that if we signed the lease, and then ask the Tonkawa Tribe to help with costs, that there was no downside. Bill, John, and Steve are interested in going to the Tonkawa Tribe and meeting with them once the lease is signed. Bill suggested that the Tonkawa Tribe might want to buy the property outright. If that happened, then perhaps we might manage it as long as they agree to that. There was some discussion that a 3-year lease might be needed. Dave Cunningham replied that although we had asked for a 3-year lease, the family wanted only a 1-year lease. Dave had convinced them to go up to a 2-year lease.

Steven asked for an electronic vote so that board members would have time to read the lease over and vote by Friday, April 21. Bill will be able to do a proxy vote once appointed to the Board.

The discussion moved to ***Hike the Hill.*** Steven met with Congressmen Cuellar and Doggett in Washington in an attempt to get more money for the Trail. Staffers from both offices are working at the national level to get the top administration at the National Park Service to increase funding. Four other representatives signed a Dear Colleague letter expressing their support on the federal level.

State Funding. Jesse suggested that perhaps more pressure from the National Park Service could help but there were many priorities for the State level representatives. State Representative Raymond said that no money so far has been targeted for ElCaT but maybe \$200,000 per year could go to the Historical Commission which could then be allotted for us. Brad Patterson (Historical Commission) said there is a budget rider that has been approved by the house for \$200,000 but unless someone puts that into the Senate bill, it might have to go to a conference committee and final decisions are usually made there. It was suggested that at least half of the hurdle is over. Jessie asked whether an appropriation would come straight from the Historical Commission to us, and Brad explained that if all was OK, the money would be passed directly over to us.

We were encouraged to let our State representatives know (best by calling them via phone) that we were in favor of the Trail getting more funds.

The ***Lobanillo Master Naturalist Project*** consists of two chapters with Stephen performing flora and fauna surveys at Lobanillo Swales. The second survey was on March 21. Joyce corrected Steven's report in that the second chapter listed was really El Camino Real and not Three Missions.

Steven gave a brief update to the ***San Marcus Community Development Project.*** He has encouraged including the Camino Real into new neighborhood/shopping developments, and has shared a conceptual strategy for the development of the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California National Historic Trails to show how the Camino Real could be developed into each of their plans.

Additionally, he explained about the Association's ***website revamping*** and that it was now smartphone friendly. He told us about the new GIS interns: Georgia Lamb and Qingyu Zhou. Joyce mentioned that the

Rancheria Grande needed repositioning on the Association GIS maps and Steve suggested that she-email him a reminder in June.

New Business

Committee Reports. Dave Reagan said he would like each committee chair to report on where they stood regarding the strategic plan at each meeting in the future.

Community Chapter Reports. Dave reported for the *Trail de Flores Chapter* for absent Chapter Chair Anthony Delgado. The chapter will host a National Trails Day event on June 3 in Helton Nature Park. There will be a busy program starting at 9:00 AM and lasting until approximately 3:00 PM. If the park is certified in time as a Historic Park, there will be a special presentation recognizing it as such.

The chapter has concentrated on improving the Trail section to Helton Park. They would like to use the abandoned rail corridor and will be meeting with representatives and the judge on April 28th to try to get their support in encouraging Union Pacific to allow them to use it as a trail.

Joyce then reported on the *Rancheria Grande Chapter*. They continue to work on the Baumann/Conner Trail elements and have now coordinated their efforts with the Federal Park Architects. They continue to do outreach with information tables, presentations, and training. At their next chapter meeting, May 4, Bob O'Dell will speak on the Tonkawa Tribe. Finally, the chapter asked for review and approval of their latest logo design. Bob made a motion to approve, John seconded it, and it was approved.

Agency Reports. Angelica reported from the *National Park Service*. They have just sent out the agreement between NPS and the Association and also a five-year agreement for Caddo Mounds State Park. Angelica explained that Aaron Maher will return in June and in the meantime, Carol Wentler was acting supervisor and Angelica the assistant supervisor. Jill Jensen (an archeologist) will now be the permanent lead planner. Jordan Jared will be the external compliance reviewer. A new historical librarian is coming at the end of May. They are looking for a historical/cultural resource team leader and hope to have it filled by late summer.

Carol Clark might be able to go to Floresville June 3rd to dedicate the trail there. The TxDOT signage plan is on schedule. Anyone with questions can ask Coreen (Cory) Donnelly. The Rancheria Grande has been incorporated with the changes in the plan. It is called the Retracement Trail by NPS.

Steven asked about the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail route that Biden signed in January. Angelica said they had just found out that it is in their workload, and it will take a few years as it has just gotten started. Jill Jensen is leading the effort. Their first object is to get a comprehensive management plan completed after the feasibility study.

Jesse asked and Angelica replied that she didn't know if they were getting extra money for doing that job or if it was more than what we had gotten for helping us. But she explained that there was a lot of work to do for a new trail –proposing the exact route, signifying significant sites, signing for routes, tribal outreach, and then management.

Jessie added that the FPS can't add routes (that has to go through Congress) but minor adjustments can be made in current counties (but not the adding of new counties). Adding new counties would have to go through Congress so he wondered if adding routes would get more money for the FPS. Jessie asked whether if we add routes to our trail - would it be done piecemeal or as a whole? Angelica said we should coordinate with Jill Jensen to plan out any strategy plans and where they can help, perhaps we would want to have a workshop.

Brad Patterson then gave a brief review of the *Texas Historical Commission* but in general he said he'd be giving most information during the member meeting later in the day. He said that the THC recorded about 3.4 million visitors to Texas' sites - 73% Caucasian including visitors from other countries, 15% Hispanic, and 5% African American. He said the Butterfield Hotel is still standing but also is still scheduled for demolition.

The Board then recessed at 10:58 AM to have lunch and the members meeting. It would readjourn to take their votes after the membership meeting.

The Members' Meeting (12 noon – 5 pm)

The speakers followed the agenda as published. Talks by Jesus "Frank" de la Teja on the Baron de Bastrop; Ken Kesselus on Bastrop and El Camino Real; Kay Wesson on Claudia Norvell, the DAR, and El Camino Real; and after dinner, Brian Beattie and Valerie Fowler on the Camino Crankie; and Sandra Chipley on local DAR. Everyone educated and entertained the members.

Of note, Representative Richard Peña Raymond was presented our first annual public service award for his work with the Department of Transportation on our long-sought goal of Trail signage on vital state roads.

Also, Brad Patterson elaborated on the Historical Commission projects - the Caddo Mounds Museum and hut, Casa Navarro, Presidio La Bahia, Landmark Inn waterfall repairs, and the new national historic Butterfield Trail. (The new trail retraces the 1200 miles long stage route between 1858 and 1861. It took travelers 27 days from start to finish with only 20-minute breaks.) The Historical Commission is recognizing businesses that have been in service for 50 years, among them Readfield Meats in Bryan. He described the Smithsonian traveling exhibit Main Street Heritage Tourism Initiative that trains and orients underserved rural communities with a median population of 8,000. Finally, he reminded members that when Senate Bill 1 passes, it could include more money for Trail funds.

Toni Mason (TPWD) described pertinent park efforts along and related to the Trail and reminded us that all parks/trails should have proper insignia. Brian Deaton (EICaT Lead GIS Coordinator) presented on *The Survey 123* app. Angelica Sanchez Clark (NPS) gave a general update.

At 4:15 during the General Membership Meeting, members unanimously approved the Board members as recommended on the ballot (Regional Directors - Jesus "Jesse" Trevino for South Texas and Tom Byrd for Brazos; At-Large Directors – Adam Adams, Bob Perkins, and William Doolittle) and approved a revision to the By-laws that eliminates the following two sentences: "An elected officer may be elected to two successive terms in the same office. After two terms out of office a person may run again for the same office."

Reconvened Board Meeting

At approximately 5 pm, the general membership adjourned to the reception and the Board reconvened to elect the officers. Bob Ward made the motion and John Kisalus seconded the motion to accept the officers Dave Regan (President); Jesse Trevino (Vice-President); John Kisalus (Treasurer); and Joyce Conner, (Secretary). The vote was unanimous. Bob Ward made a motion and John Kisalus seconded the motion to adjourn the Board meeting. The Board meeting was then officially adjourned to the reception.

Submitted by Joyce Conner, Secretary