

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association
Board Of Directors Quarterly Meeting
July 15, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 10:11 AM by President Dave Regan. Participating in person were Joyce Conner, Cindy Freeman, Brad Patterson (Director of Community Heritage Development, Texas Historical Commission), Judge Bob Perkins, Dave Regan, Bob Ward, and Executive Director Steven Gonzales. Entering later was Bill Doolittle. Also participating via zoom were Miguel Angel Fernandez de Mazambroz, Tom Byrd, Derek Casteel (TMF), John Kisalus, Jesse Trevino, Angelica “Cynthia” Sanchez-Clark and Cory Donnelly (last two NPS).

A quorum was determined to be present with Adam Adams absent. Judge Perkins moved to accept the April 14, 2023, minutes. The motion was seconded by Bob Ward and approved.

Approval of Committee Reports

The **Finance Committee Report** was presented by John Kisalus. Dave asked if there were any line-item outliers, and the response was that the interpretive workshop had gone a little over budget. However, NPS did cover some unexpected amounts especially with airline tickets unexpectedly high.

Dave had a question about individual contributions and was told that the \$16,750 was based on previous years. Steven mentioned that they were still working to get a \$50,000 grant. Some administrative fees would come out of GTI or Travis Audubon. Dave questioned whether the first four categories under Operations (Chapter Expenses, Advertising, Bank Charges, and Board Expenses) should be budgeted. A suggestion was made to make them “unexpected” category. Steven said he could work on new categories. John suggested that we see how much “unexpected” there would be with no separate line item. Since chapter expenses should come straight from chapter funds, perhaps we should set up chapter accounts. Do we want to put that in the overall budget? Will Andrews, our bookkeeper, will be asked.

It was mentioned that the Victoria County Historical Commission wanted to have a membership. Would they then be recognized on our website? At \$100, might other historical commissions want to join?

Judge Perkins motioned to accept the Quarterly Report. The motion was seconded by Bob Ward and approved.

The **EICaT Endowment Update** was by Cindy Freeman and Derek Casteel (TMF). Derek explained that the TMF was originally for Methodist nonprofits, but they were extending service to other nonprofits like ours. To raise awareness, they would like to include our nonprofit organization in a media event that should be beneficial to both of us in that the exposure might get us more donations. The board supported the idea whereas John wondered how it would benefit our organization.

The Wespath Multiple Asset Fund invests 65% in equities and 35% in other. There are no hedge funds. They invest heavily in international companies. Their objective is to hold even with some growth. In the last year, its value has gone up almost 11%.

Executive Committees Reports.

Steven reported that Elaine Sullivan is working 16 hours a week and is not an intern. The Director evaluation should be held around October. The question of having a leadership/team building event was raised. Cindy questioned whether it needed to be on a regular schedule or only as needed. We have six new Board members now. Brad was asked whether THC offers leadership training, but he was unaware and even if they had such, he did not know whether it would extend to partners. Dave suggested that the Executive Committee discuss team building. Steven suggested that a Sugarloaf tour might be combined with a meeting at Cedar Hill in the Fall.

Resource Protection Committee: Steven reported for Bill Doolittle (as he was late to the meeting). Effort has been concentrated on becoming a Land Trust. Doing so involves joining the Land Trust Alliance. There are two types of membership available for ElCaT: Land trust membership (\$1700/yr) or Nonprofit affiliate membership (\$1200/yr). Affiliate memberships do not acquire or steward land. Both memberships require the Board to adopt a resolution committing the organization to Land Trust standards and practices. The dues provide for insurance in case we have to go to court to enforce an easement (we pay the first \$5000 and the insurance covers the rest).

Steven recommends full Land Trust membership in the Land Trust Alliance. Discussion centered on easements. If we are a Land Trust, we could buy property that contains portions of the trail which would be put into an easement. We could then sell to a developer (generating more funds to protect more property). The original property would be protected and could make the property more valuable. The only reason to be a land trust is so the buyer gets a tax write off. The new owner would do the monitoring of the Land Trust but ElCaT would be responsible for protecting it. Dave asked if we would need to pay \$1750 a year without the possibility of buying land right now. Is there an urgency in doing this right now or could we wait until we have more money? Bob suggested that he talk to the Hill Country Conservatory and get more information.

Community Relations Committee: Bob Ward said he was waiting for full signage in Travis County. They might need to get on the County Commissioners Court agenda to approve the signs. This should be easier to accomplish now that county funding would be much lower now that TXDOT is installing signs on their ROW. Judge Perkins is going to get on their agenda.

Bob mentioned that McKinney Falls could have a speaker series to talk to hikers on Trail Day. He is also talking to Pioneer Farms about a Trail Day on which Brian Beattie and Valerie Fowler might perform El Camino Crankie in the fall and winter.

He reported on the Audubon Tract (Blair Woods Sanctuary?). They are trying to get a 1936 marker interpretive sign installed. It is also missing a Fort Colorado sign.

Development Committee: Jesse reported that he is trying to find pro bono staff to help his efforts.

Chip Briscoe had been working with the Mitchell Foundation and thought they could meet with the foundation members, also possibly get a small donation to start and then more later.

Jessie is looking for new partnerships in San Antonio who want to donate towards new trails. They are now looking for "Great Springs." Jesse did concentrate on state and federal funding and wonders if there is a business intern to help with grant writing. Steven would check to find a student studying nonprofits at graduate level.

Governance Committee: Judge Perkins said that if we know of any people we would like to make honorary members to let him know.

The Board broke for lunch at 11:44 and returned at 12:01.

Tom Byrd joined the meeting via zoom.

Agency Reports:

NPS: Angelica “Cynthia” Sanchez-Clark and Cory Donnelly.

NPS had funds for improvements at Rio Grande Arroyo San Francisco site. TXDOT would be resurfacing a parking lot with gravel. Steven was going to check with county officials to see how much longer they would need to improve the site. Jessie suggested that we let state representatives know about the project.

Angelica reported on the *NPS online signage app*. Forty-four waysigns have been inventoried. Once they have more data, they will decide how to manage it, but it's always good to remind them to let them know which signs are down or need to be replaced or repaired. August 2 is the deadline on which should be their priority signs list. They would appreciate it if the Board gave them a list.

If you want to learn how to help with the app, visit “use experience web app”. Regarding trail design and development team updates and signage, Jesse mentioned these are the signs that Representative Raymond helped with TXDOT. Signs have been ordered for Cherokee County and there may be a dedication with TXDOT. Jesse wondered if Representative Raymond would be there and Jessie would check on that. The Rancheria Grande was updated and will be finalized in September. For both areas, we may want our honorary members to be invited to dedications.

The *Southwest Border Protection Program* has funded the Rio Grande Arroyo San Francisco rehabilitation. Texas is planning to employ floating barriers in the center of the Rio Grande to inhibit crossings. Brad mentioned there was probably no way to give input regarding the buoys, but because the area was pristine, buoys might have less impact than fencing, but in the future, they may be burying a line to be the fence.

Angelica reviewed some history and partnerships. They have a new staff member, Nick Myers, who is a historian with a PhD from Cornell in Latin American studies. NPS has completed site certificates in the Blair Woods Audubon site, Helton Park, Bastrop, Fort Boggy, Goliad, and Mission Tejas. They give thanks to their trail partners who have given them the names of the sites that will be included in the binational, bilingual ElCaT travel itinerary project. Stephen mentioned there are more sites to be certified like Casa Navarro, and Casa la Bahia. They may get new staff to help with partnership certification. In September the new staff member will get site descriptions into a travel itinerary (part of their digital media application). Later, sites in Mexico will be included.

Interpretation updates - in October there's a call for a proposal (due December) to develop more trails. Corey would like to talk to Steven about those. Friends of the Texas Historical Commission are connecting Caddo Mounds State Historic Site and El Camino Real. This is a new trail with ADA capability, and distance markers. They think it will finish in 2025. Stephen would like to connect both Parks as they are only 6 miles apart (could be along the highway). For Floresville, Carol Clark is finishing a mini exhibit. Helton Park was dedicated this past National Trails Day.

Jessie asked about the latest on their leadership. Carol is still acting. The next full time Superintendent (once Aaron has retired) may be known in September as they are trying to find someone to be hired full time for about one year and up to four years who will handle outreach and partnerships, but the job description is not written yet.

Texas Historical Commission: Brad told us that the state budget has passed a large amount of money for historic state and revolution sites - \$300 million will go into an endowment for state historical sites and out of that, \$45 million will be courthouse restorations. They are renewing and updating a travel publication. Although they are not creating new sites, they now have the Iwo Jima Replica Monument (the 37th historical site) and the Stephen F Austin Memorial (death, 38th historical site) to care for.

Real Places, April 4-5, 2024, Austin. Publication submissions are open and they're looking for speakers. They have 800 partners.

*Museum on Main Street**. They are partnering with the Smithsonian for 2024-2025. Out of 52 communities that applied, only 7 were selected. One is in Saint Augustine. *MoMS provides access to the Smithsonian through museum exhibitions, research, educational resources, and programming.

Brad reported that they are continuing to work on the Caddo Mounds Museum and hut, Casa Navarro, Presidio La Bahia, and Landmark Inn. Steven asked if there was an update on Presideo La Bahia. Brad said that the signs have been located and he will check to see whether they have been installed. Steven wondered if El Camino booklet would be republished. Brad doesn't think funds were provided to cover it.

Administrative Report: Executive Directors Report (Steven Gonzales)

Name Correction: Steven explained the situation with our dba name change and going forward for grants. He is in his 8th – 9th effort to correct our name with Texas Secretary of State. This is critical for us to renew our NPS annual grant. There were several suggestions made on how to get through the process. Dave made a motion to approve pursuit of a name change to “historic” from “historical”, Joyce seconded, and it was passed.

Legislative Funding: After much work, meetings, and phone calls, the current session did not include any funding by the State for the Trail. Brad said the process has to start all over again, as the Rider will not be maintained in the next session. It was suggested that we start even before the session begins (in November) with both the House Appropriations and Finance Committees.

Sugarloaf: Steven has met with the Tonkawa Tribe and discussed how we might work together with the Tribe after the Tribe purchases the property. The Tribe has agreed to work with us in general towards administering the property for them. We need to come up with ideas of what we expect to do. Once acquired, maybe we could do historical restoration and archaeology. John wondered if they would fund archaeology. Would we have an annual fee? Brad said we needed to know what the Tribe will allow. Steven suggested that we email our thoughts about Sugarloaf to him.

20th Anniversary of Designation of El Camino Real de los Tejas. Steven is suggesting a Camino Real Day to celebrate the Trail. We can post events on ElCaT website. Jessie suggested that we have our first annual fundraiser in October 2024 because the 19th is the 20th anniversary of ElCaT. This might coincide with the Cameron Festival in October 2024.

Mailout. Steven is promoting our traveling exhibit and the Camino Crankie Suite to raise awareness of ElCaT and Trail.

San Antonio to Austin Report. This information is for Travis, Hays, Comal. And Bexar Counties. The final portion of the report is almost complete. It is for city leaders and planners regarding the Trail.

NPS Interpretive Outreach. There are continued meetings to engage stakeholders for interpretive themes for future products.

UT Architecture Studio. Prof. Wiedemann is teaching an architecture studio Fall 2023 that will focus on El Camino Real.

PNTS Nov 2023 Workshop. NTS is hosting the 2023 NT Workshop in Orlando, Florida, Nov. 7-9. There is an early-bird registration.

Jesse spoke about the new Spanish historical portal and the website Royal Academy of History. It contains a huge amount of data, over 1500 entries of Who, What, When, and Where. He suggested that we may have someone explain it at our next meeting. <https://queensofiaspanishinstitute.org/history/>.

New Business

Community Chapter Reports. Dave reported for the *Trail de Flores Chapter* for absent Chapter Chair Anthony Delgado. The chapter hosted a National Trails Day event on June 3 in Helton Nature Park. 50 people attended.

The chapter has concentrated on improving the Trail section to Helton Park. They are still working with members from State Representative Guillen's office and Congresswoman de la Cruz' office, in addition to the county judge and the Floresville City Manager to support their effort to meet with representatives of Union Pacific. The city of Kennedy between Floresville and Kennedy is buying the rail line and they might be able to use that line. They'll work with them to see if it's a possibility.

Joyce then reported on the *Rancheria Grande Chapter*. The chapter has been working on community involvement by holding various events. On **May 4th** they hosted a presentation by Bob O'Dell in Rockdale titled the *Tonkawa Tribe: Who are they really?* Over 45 citizens attended. On **May 11th** Dr. John Pruett presented a program reenacting a missionary trip along ElCaT at the Texas Master Naturalist El Camino Real chapter monthly meeting. On **June 3rd** National Trails Day, Mike Conner and John Pruett led a group of master naturalists, Trail members, and interested citizens along Walk the Rancheria Grande Trail. Over 30 citizens attended. On **June 12th**, landowners, ElCaT, and National Park Service personnel zoomed to finalize pedestrian signage. ElCaT office is assisting landowners with a brochure. On **July 10th** Mike Conner completed the course for the new MPs signage app as was discussed at the annual meeting in Bastrop and encouraged other members to take the course so that they could start entering Milam County trail signs into the computer application. In **July and August**, the chapter plans to set up information tables about the trail at some Wildlife and Woodlands Landowner workshops in Leon, Milam, Burleson, and Robertson Counties. On **October 14th** the Cameron Chamber of Commerce and the chapter host another Rancheria Grande tour during Cameron's festival. On **July 4th - 15th in 2024** the Rockdale sesquicentennial committee will be leasing ElCaT historical panels, and our chapter participation will be decided at a later time.

Steven mentioned that Elaine would be working next week on patches and other signature items.

At 2:21pm Bill made the motion to adjourn, Joyce seconded it. The vote was unanimous.

Submitted by Joyce Conner, Secretary