

**El Camino Real de los Tejas
National Historic Trail Association
Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting
January 20, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am by President Dave Regan. In attendance were board members Jesse Treviño (Zoom), John Kisalus, Tom Byrd, Miguel Ángel Fernández de Mazarambroz, Joyce Conner, Dave Regan (Zoom), Bob Perkins, Bob Ward, William Doolittle, and Cindy Freeman. Also present were Brad Patterson (THC), Angelica Sanchez-Clark (NPS via Zoom), Paula Sisco (Chair, Rancheria Grande Chapter), and Executive Director Steven Gonzales. Absent was board member Adam Adams. A quorum was met.

Consideration of Minutes: Joyce asked for consideration of the October 28, 2023, minutes. With a minor edit, Judge Perkins then moved for approval, Tom Byrd seconded, and the minutes were approved.

Executive Committee Report: Dave reported that there were two items in the Strategic Plan that are the committee's charge: the Executive Director evaluation which was completed in October and Team Building/Leadership Training. The team building/training discussion was postponed to the **New Business** section.

Update on EICaT Endowment: See submitted report by Cindy Freeman.

When asked about the distribution, Cindy suggested that Steven try to get it from Frost Bank and if needed, to email TMF and they would make sure it was done. (Joyce later checked the October 2023 minutes and \$1250 had been approved by the Board for distribution in January 2024.)

Great Promise for American Indians: There was a brief break in the meeting when Amy Taulman and a Boy Scout Troop Master T. Starr, who were attending a meeting in the building for Great Promise for American Indians, visited the Board.

Finance Committee Report: See submitted report. Steven explained that Lobanillo Swales is worth more than recorded as an asset and could be sold to the federal government to increase our funds. If the National Park Service purchases it, the land could conceivably be transferred to the administration of the Sabine National Forest for long-term stewardship and thus, permanently protect the land. Agreement from the National Trails office of the NPS and the National Forest Service would be needed to proceed.

The Tonkawa Tribe \$20,000 administration funds should arrive early February. Joyce Conner suggested that we change our financial records to show Red Mountain instead of Sugarloaf Mountain in the line item that is used to track finances for the site. Steven said they could do this with no problem. Name changes on things such as the name of the site registered with the U.S. Geological Survey would have to be worked on by the Tonkawa Tribe.

Steven is planning to use monies from the 20K this year to upgrade the computer systems, improve working space, and potentially bring in more students.

Dave Regan made a motion to approve the budget report, Judge Perkins seconded, and the motion passed.

Resource Protection Committee Report: See submitted report. As per Professor Fred Valdez's suggestion, Bill Doolittle reported that he is working on creating an *EICaT field school* under the direction of a UT PhD. It is anticipated that the first year of the effort will consist of doing historical background literature searches and a site survey; and the field school actually taking place in the summer of 2025.

Professor Valdez had also expressed interest in creating a *15-acre archaeological repository for excavated human remains* in line with NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Brad Patterson explained that there are many research and legal issues. Tom and Jesse questioned the Board spending time on this issue. Steven will pass on landowner contact information if Dr. Valdez wants to pursue this project.

Bob Ward suggested that we partner with TAS (Texas Archeological Society) on the field school and can get archeology stewards to walk the property. Tom suggested that we have a policy memo that outlines our goals, such as a “surface investigation.” Steven said Dr. Valdez and Blackland Collaborative were planning on visiting sometime in March.

Bill Doolittle said he will make some changes to his report and circulate an amended one.

Community Relations Report: See submitted report. Bob Ward explained some of the problems in getting both the Travis County ROW and San Marcos/Hays County interpretive and orientation panel signage completed. Bob is focusing first on Travis County.

Development Committee: See submitted report. John Kisalus has met with Congressman Cloud’s district director, Mark Longoria, and invited Cloud to open the Annual meeting in Victoria. He also talked to Cloud about getting more funding and invited US Congressman Cuellar to attend our annual meeting.

Dave added that he had been talking to Truman Reed in US Representative Monica De La Cruz’s office on his local trail issues and would like to include her in any correspondence or visits.

Steven is creating a sample funding appeal letter to send to Board members’ local representatives on State and Federal levels. Brad Patterson reminded us that THC’s version of Hike the Hill is the beginning of March. Steven will send Brad ElCaT’s talking points and send Jesse contact information for Von Aldridge (THC’s legislative liaison). Also, a suggestion was made that Chip Briscoe be notified about Red Mountain as a way to interest the Mitchell Foundation.

Governance Committee Report: See submitted report. Steven suggested that the Board could consider amending the bylaws in April from 11 Board members to 13.

(Lunch 11:37 – 12 noon)

Executive Director’s Report: See submitted report. Steven plans to zoom with responders re: El Camino Real Day events. Steven suggested that we might want to consider Jim Neal for the Board. There is ongoing discussion on member/interested citizen hats and colors of Board member shirts.

New Business:

Board Training Opportunities Report: Dave suggested a team building/learning experience during our annual meeting weekend. If we do an online exercise that is more team building rather than Board education, Dave has found an online feature with the National Park Service that could be modified for us.

Another option discussed was to go to a site near Victoria on Saturday. For example, the Clegg property, the Mission Espiritu Santo, and/or Goliad. Dave will try to incorporate a tour.

ElCaT Community Chapter Reports:

Trail de Flores: Dave gave a verbal report, as Anthony Delgado was absent. They are thinking about having a virtual race along the Trail for El Camino Real Day and are still working on the idea. They are also talking to Carol Clark about the status of mini exhibits that are to go along the Floresville Trail. Dave is talking to Congressman De La Cruz’s office (Truman Reed) to get help with negotiations with the Union Pacific Railroad to allow the chapter to create an easement using their abandoned rail corridor. The effort to connect Pecan Park to the trailhead at 97 has not been approved.

Rancheria Grande: See submitted report. Paula Sisco introduced herself and presented the report.

Agency Reports:

NPS Report: Angelica Sanchez-Clark, the partnerships and outreach coordinator, reported that they were arranging for Steven and our new Association Board President to travel to Santa Fe in the summer, to meet with their management and administrative team.

Also, Aaron Mahr retired as the National Trails Superintendent on Oct. 31. Carol Wendler continues to be Acting Superintendent. The Acting Deputy Superintendent is now Kristen Van Fleet until May.

Their office met with Steven and Travis Audubon Society at Blair Woods Nature Preserve, Historic Fort, Colorado. They have since designed and ordered a custom site ID sign and pedestrian trail distance sign which should arrive January/February. They continue to work on the site's interpretation signs.

In December they attended the first Caddo Culture Day since the tornado. They are working on the *Caddo Mound State Historic Site - Reimagining Spanish Texas* through diverse stories and enhancing trail access making them ADA accessible as a connect-trails-to-parks project.

Carol Clark and the interpretive team are working on an orientation panel for the Rancheria Grande.

They are working on an interpretation plan contract (50% of the draft plan should be received by January 31st). This will include the planning foundations, significant statements, themes, and management goals, audience information, visitor objectives, etc., along the trail. It will include an education report and reports regarding the Camino efforts in Mexico. Steven and some Board members will review the draft.

They are trying to provide digital content for the trail by providing links to digital articles and travel itineraries for Louisiana/Texas border and Goliad Rd., video of the mission, Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Charles Bright Visitor Center. They are working on creating a Spanish language website for the Camino and a bilingual/binational travel itinerary for the Trail.

Dave asked regarding Emily Kessler who he last contacted in September about some videos along their trail for which they would like her help.

Texas Historical Commission Report: Brad Patterson gave the report.

Presidio La Bahia: THC operates the site under a management agreement. Several associations are negotiating to transfer their properties and assets to the THC. There are also negotiations ongoing at the request of the Diocese of Victoria, who own the Presidio, to transfer their property in its entirety, with possibly the exception of the Chapel building, to THC.

Caddo Mounds: A grant project is ongoing within the site to improve the trails and interpretation specific to the Community. In addition, the new visitor center and museum are physically complete, but are awaiting the exhibits. The rededication and opening of the museum and exhibits has a tentative date of May 25, Memorial Day weekend.

Executive Director, the State Historic Preservation Officer: Dr. Edward Lengel, formerly of the National Medal of Honor Museum in Arlington, TX, has accepted the position. He has worked at the World War II Museum in New Orleans and the White House Historical Association; and has written fourteen books, mostly about the American Revolution; and worked on George Washington's papers. Brad recommends that we invite him to our annual meeting.

New Deputy Executive Director for Preservation Programs: Brad has accepted the position and is now over four divisions: archaeology, architecture, community and heritage development (which he had previously been leading), and history programs. He will know in about six months how much he can continue to be involved with the Association, but he will still be engaging some with the trail, EICaT, and the National Park Service.

THC continues to acquire property and is currently purchasing Fort Martin Scott in Fredericksburg. They are also looking for 6,000 acres of rangeland for a Longhorn herd. It must be in the historic range of the Longhorns and in the Abilene-Albany area.

Regarding the possibility of THC buying Lobanillo Swales: THC has an internal process for whether they accept a new property, or actively partner with EICaT. However, officially THC only takes property that comes with some financial resources. Any purchase deal would require legislative approval. John Kisalus suggested that there might be a package

deal using the Neal property. Brad will provide THC information to Steven, as there might be possibilities of operating agreements with or acquisition by THC.

At 2:02 pm Dave Regan motioned to adjourn the meeting. John Kisalus seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting: **April 19, 2024**

Future meeting dates: **April 19 (Annual Meeting in Victoria), July 20, Oct. 26 (moved to accommodate El Camino Real Day on Oct. 19)**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joyce Conner, Secretary