

**El Camino Real de los Tejas
National Historic Trail Association
Board of Directors Meeting
January 18, 2025**

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 am by President William (Bill) Doolittle. In attendance were board members Ambassador Miguel Ángel Fernández de Mazarambroz, Judge Bob Perkins, Bob Ward, Jessie Trevino, John Kisalus, Tom Byrd, Joyce Conner. Also present were Paula Sisco (Chair, Ranchería Grande Chapter), and Executive Director Steven Gonzales. On Zoom were Paula Ogden Hughes (NPS), George Hernández (Board Member), and Anthony Delgado (Trail de Flores). Absent was board member Adam Adams. A quorum was met.

Consideration of Minutes: Joyce asked for consideration of the September 21, 2024, minutes. Judge Perkins made a motion for approval, Bob Ward seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

Director's Report: See submitted report. Additional notes follow.

Regarding El Camino Day, Steven Gonzalez is trying to find grant funds for possibly up to 10 organizations to help fund future El Camino Real Day events. John Kisalus attended a reenactment at Presidio la Bahia and hopes that a photo he took of a family will be published in our newsletter. Steven added that the Partnership for the National Trails System has scheduled a land summit the day after El Camino Real Day in San Antonio 2025, and Steven will invite those attendees to attend our events.

Regarding the SA to Austin Report, Joyce suggested that ElCaT make available our resources on our website. Steven will look into it.

Regarding Real Places, Bob Ward will be introducing speakers on folklore, history, and storytelling.

Regarding Annual Meeting with Alliance for Texas History, Steven will be reaching out to Board members to recommend speakers. Tamara Walter was suggested as a speaker.

Regarding State of Texas Funding, Jesse suggested that he continue to work with Steven pushing an "economic development context" with Senator Nichols before approaching other state representative contacts. Bill suggested we consider Judge Chris Davis' wife for Board membership to represent East Texas.

Regarding Grants, Steven explained that the Association needs funding to build capacity at the same time that we expect a potential \$20K shortage this year. The Partnership for National Trails will not be issuing a \$10K grant this year to us that has been paying Elaine's salary. Steven is trying to balance our needs with funding sources and asked that if we have connections to anyone on his list or to other funding sources to let him know.

Regarding Onion Creek Metropolitan Park Project, Steven is working to get the original contract from a nonworking hard drive so as to confirm his understanding of the conditions of the contract with GTI.

Regarding an office move: Steven made the Board aware that the owners of the current building in which ElCaT is located is up for sale. There is no definite timeline for vacating the office but Steven would like us to be prepared. Steven would like to keep an office that is within easy distance to college interns who work for us.

Regarding the Texas America 250 Commission, Bob Ward and Miguel Ángel Fernández de Mazarambroz have volunteered to sit on their advisory board.

Chapter Reports

Trail de Flores: See submitted report. Additional notes follow.

Regarding El Camino Real Day, Anthony Delgado reported the chapter used an app called My virtual mission. It can be used for tracking your activities like biking, hiking, horse riding, walking, on a computer. The app allowed them to create waypoints with descriptions at each. The user is able to see themselves depicted as they progress along the 31.5 mile trail. They only had 13 individuals participate online and hope that next year will draw more people. Joyce asked whether the event was still available online and Anthony thought that it was accessible for up to 90 or so days but he wasn't sure if that was after the event was concluded and he would check on that.

Three of the chapter members also went live with a Facebook event. They spoke to people who dialed in, captured a video, posted it on the Facebook page, and walked 1.5 miles of the trail. The group then participated in a 5K in the Bexar County Historical Commission's event that is mentioned in Steven's report. Both the chapter and Bexar County events gave medals to participants.

Regarding Helton River Nature Park, Steven asked whether overnight camping was allowed, as he had been asked that question by a scout group. Anthony said that they did.

Ranchería Grande: See submitted report. Additional notes follow.

Regarding the TAS Field School, Steven explained that ElCaT has recommended to TAS that the Trail should be the focus of the research, starting with Red Mountain, but also including the mission sites, and other areas.

Tom Byrd explained that it was a weeklong school, and there would be tourism opportunities for businesses in Robertson and Milam Counties. Registration is 3 or 4 days. The principal investigator in the past was Tamara Walter. People usually stay in their own tents or in motels in the area. There is training on excavation, surveying (walking on the land), recording of findings, working in the lab, etc. There are usually presentations in the evenings, which could include the Camino Real. It is a good opportunity for folks to be encouraged to join our organization.

Agency Reports: National Park Service

Paula Ogden Hughes, the lead of the interpretation team for the National Trails Office, gave the report. Paula thanked Steven for talking with the Cub Scout Group and proposing some projects for them to get involved and invested in our National Historic Trails. This will instill in them an appreciation of history and the reason for preserving it. "We have to listen to each other and learn from them as well as share."

Their new superintendent, Patrick Malone, started on October 20, and is expecting to come to our Board/annual members meeting in May.

They expect a decrease in funding or it will stay flat after March. However, they are still working their best. Rachel and Evan (who is part of the inflation reduction act and is believed to be with them for up to four years) are working on a backlog of projects as well as some on our new projects. Em, Brian, Carol,

and Nick work in the Interpretation Group. Corey and Faith work in the Sign Planning Group, when during fiscal 2024, they created four sign plans and within those plans, they created 26 signs. That included Audubon, Blair Woods, Audubon Site ID trail and distance signs; Ranchería Grande ID and pedestrian signs; and the Houston County, TX, sign plan and directional signage. In the History and Partnership Team are Angelica, Guy, Nick, Emily, and Rebecca (the new public affairs and partnership outreach specialist).

Angelica and Em have been working on the LT bilingual binational travel itinerary project with ElCaT. Currently, the content includes an annotated bibliography, 33 thematic essays, 52 expanded and new site descriptions with images and Spanish language translations of the narrative content. They are currently finalizing translations. (Angelica sends thanks to ElCaT, the Texas Historical Commission, and the Louisiana Office of State Parks for supporting that project.) The History Team also met with Dr. Teresa Van Hoy, a professor of history at Saint Mary's University, and two of her students regarding their research on enslavement along the National Historic Trail. Dr. Van Hoy is also researching the history of slavery in San Antonio, with a focus on Casa Navarro and the Navarro family.

Finally, they have been working through a contractor, Melanie Mae, on the Interpretive Plan for the National Historic Trail with input from many public meetings. The plan guides them and their partners in creating interpretive material. It is expected to be updated every 10 years as more is learned about the Trail. They plan to be finished with this version and put it on their website in the next quarter.

Paula reported that in 2024 they had 132,000 hits on the website and their app. With us, they've created and uploaded nine articles or places pages onto the website. They had 30 volunteers who donated 3898 hours and drove 4903 miles (thanks to ElCaT volunteers).

To recruit good employees, new hires can work in Salt Lake City, Santa Fe, Kansas City, or San Francisco and also work remotely. However, they often travel together and are very close to each other.

The Texas Historical Commission Report – was not received.

Recurring Business

Financial Contributions of Board Members and Reporting Via Ad Hoc Committees – Bill Doolittle suggested two by-law amendments. These were discussed and the Board moved to move forward with the financial contributions of Board Members but chose not to move forward with the ad hoc committees. See the President's report from January 2025 Business Meeting.

Public Relations Committee Report – Bob Ward reported that he has been working to get the Bob Bullock Museum to have exhibits on El Camino or the Spanish connections, Galvez, etc. He will need artifacts (a map, etc.).

Travis County is putting together a Greenbelt that will stretch from Buda to Manor, basically following Onion Creek. Bob has been talking to the Parks Department about having trail days to follow the Onion Creek portion of the El Camino and then up Gillian Creek into Manor.

Terry Booth is wanting a marker for his family land north of McKinney Falls, if it qualifies.

Bob is also working with the University of Texas at the Rio Grande Campus, the Travis County Historical Commission, and the Travis County Archives on some letters donated by a woman in Alaska by John Weber in 1851 trying to get banks to buy land in Webberville to help fund African Americans go back down the Trail into Mexico to get their freedom.

Bob recommends that we get the cranky show during the TAS Field School. Collins Moore Hancock is writing a cranky on Ben Thompson, a gunfighter, gambler, and sheriff.

Bob is interested in learning more about McKinney Falls so that he can lead people on trail days.

Adjournment

Tom Byrd made a motion to adjourn and Bob Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 1 pm.

The next board meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 16, 2025, at Texas State University, San Marcos, TX. The Board meeting will commence at 9 am, breaking for lunch at 11 am. The Annual Members Meeting will commence at 11:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Conner, Board Member