

**El Camino Real de los Tejas  
National Historic Trail Association  
Board of Directors Meeting  
September 21, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am by President William (Bill) Doolittle. In attendance were board members Jesse Treviño (Zoom), John Kisalus, Tom Byrd, Joyce Conner, Dave Regan (Zoom), Judge Bob Perkins, and George Hernandez (Zoom). Also present were Brad Patterson (THC), Paula Sisco (Chair, Ranchería Grande Chapter), and Executive Director Steven Gonzales. Absent were board members Miguel Ángel Fernández de Mazambroz, Adam Adams, and Bob Ward. A quorum was met.

Bill Doolittle began by thanking the Association for their trust and confidence in his new leadership. He expressed that he would like to concentrate on extending our mission as we are both national and international. He quoted William Cunningham, former president of UT in Austin as having said, “a lot of money doesn’t make a university great, but you can’t have a great university without a lot of money” and Bill believes that holds true for us. He would also like to concentrate on raising money, perhaps by acquiring the services of a professional who may later become a board member.

**Consideration of Minutes:** Joyce asked for consideration of the April 19, 2024, Annual Meeting minutes. With minor edits (addition of motion to adjourn, adjournment time, and a spelling correction for the Medina River), Judge Perkins seconded the motion for approval, and the minutes were approved.

**Finance Committee Report:** See submitted report. John Kisalus explained that with our new timing of board meetings, we won’t have a board meeting right after our fiscal year closes, so he may send out a final end of the year report for everyone to preview.

One change in the current finance report was the Red Mountain management fee that went from \$25K to \$20K. He and Steven believe the amount would likely change as we show what we are doing regarding the property.

Joyce had questions regarding insurance. It was explained that there are two line-items regarding insurance: one for Steven’s medical and one for office and board liability. (Elaine Sullivan does not get medical insurance.) Regarding liability insurance for the office and directors, and work at Red Mountain and Lobanillo Swales, Steven wants to check for better rates next year. John motioned for approval of the budget, Judge Perkins seconded, and the financial statement was accepted.

**Governance Committee Report:** See Submitted Report. Judge Perkins reported that the Committee was recommending George Hernández of San Antonio to begin serving on the Board immediately in Place 8 At Large, (taking Dave Regan’s past position) and continuing until May 2025 at our annual meeting, where our general membership will vote on his nomination. After Mr. Hernández introduced himself, John Kisalus seconded the motion, and it was passed.

**Resource Protection Committee:** See Submitted Report.

*Tonkawa Ceremony:* Prior to the report, Bill Doolittle briefly spoke about the Tonkawa Tribe ceremony at Republic Park in Austin. Bob Ward and Steven both spoke at the event about the importance the Tonkawa were to Austinites about 150 years ago.

*Status of Resource Document:* Elaine Sullivan is updating the distribution list with current elected officials with their contact information.

*Red Mountain:* (There was a lot of discussion on this important topic.)

Joaquín Rivaya Martínez, history professor at Texas State University, is looking for one or two graduate students who would like to write a thesis on the history of Red Mountain. That document will then help with listing on the National Register of Historic Places and the Texas State Antiquities Landmarks, as well as helping with interpretive panels, etc.

TAS Summer Program: Tom Byrd inquired about the status of Red Mountain and TAS which would involve up to 400 people doing research in Milam County. Steven is in contact with Dr. Tamra Walter (a professor at Texas Tech University specializing in the Spanish Period) who is also interested in reviewing one of the mission sites. Lynn Young is trying to set up access to the mission site on the Felton's property. TAS is considering setting up accommodation at Kit Worley's Apache Pass campground with its bar and restaurant. Tom expressed wanting to be involved and was reminded that he will be involved because he is a member of the Resource Protection Committee. He explained that the TAS summer project is family-oriented, results in a TAS Bulletin, could last for more than one summer, and will expose participants to our association and our mission (which could lead to more members). Steven hopes that we create a partnership with TAS that could provide research and more timely results than going with a private research company. He believes TAS will have enough people to research the Cunningham property, more on the Conner and Baumann properties, Red Mountain, and other Milam County properties. He reiterated that they do not work with grave sites.

This project is not just about preservation but also providing education, giving historical context to the Trail.

John Kisalus asked about the future ability of EICaT to use TAS findings, as well as university historical theses. Brad explained that regarding the Historical Commission there usually are two versions of findings - one for the Commission in order to protect the location, etc., and one for the public. Bill added that university papers are publicly accessible.

Steven will work with TAS on what information the Association needs regarding any of the sites, especially as it affects the future use of Red Mountain. John suggested that we might revisit our agreement with the Tonkawa regarding confidential information. Steven confirmed that our Association is the liaison between TAS and any other organization with the Tonkawa Tribe and Red Mountain, even though the Tonkawa Tribe is a federally recognized nation. However, the Tribe will make the final decisions on improvements and/or development of the site. This project will be the main emphasis of Steven's work for the next few years. He believes TAS findings will result in reports for each different landowner's land researched. Each landowner will decide what to do with that information.

Bill described one of his classes in which his students tried to find the three Milam missions using Dr. Bolton's writings of 1906.

Jessie Treviño questioned whether we are telling people the right story when we say that all of El Camino was forged on top of native peoples' paths, as he believes the Spanish forged some of their own paths off of the Trail.

Bill wanted to know whether the Tribe has to request to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Brad is going to try to find out whether the request goes to Washington DC or Austin. (The issue is that Red Mountain is not actually on the tribe's reservation land.)

Bill discussed having more conversations with Fred Valdez about Native American remains (Tonkawa and other Texas tribes) and Steven put Valdez in touch with Dave Cunningham. There is no new news from them. (Tom Byrd again asks whether this is part of our purview.)

Judge Perkins moved to accept the committee report and Jessie Treviño seconded. All were in favor.

**Discussion on Changing the Method of Reporting:** Bill had thought to suggest changing the procedure of reporting and approving reports, but now thinks it is helpful to openly discuss the committee reports before voting to approve them.

**Executive Director's Report:** See submitted report. Regarding El Camino Real Day, it was suggested that Bob Ward's Community Relations Committee could work to have it declared by the legislature (needing a resolution). Regarding the date, Steven will work on using the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of October. Jessie would like the date to be fixed, so that he can work on fundraising events. He also would like it to be spaced away from our Annual Meeting.

Regarding the San Antonio to Austin Report, Steven is looking for a contact with the San Antonio Express News. It is possible that Erica Haskins with the Bexar County Historical Commission might help. He is also needing contacts for the television stations (and Jessie might be able to help by giving Elaine, a columnist, Steven's number). Bill suggested that the Community Relations Committee's responsibility was to get together a list of media companies and their current contacts.

Real Places will be April 23-25, 2025, at the Renaissance Hotel in Austin. There was a lot of discussion regarding the size of the audience and the valuable worth of presenting at this venue. Steven hopes that Jill Jensen of the National Park Service, working on the Butterfield Trail, will be there.

There was discussion about keeping good relationships with both retired superintendent Aaron Mahr and his replacement Patrick Malone.

John added that Steven had given a presentation at the Museum of the Coastal Bend in Victoria in September.

**Lunch:** 12-12:30 pm

Bill Doolittle changed the afternoon schedule by moving up **New Business**.

**Change Sponsor membership to Friends of the Trail:** This suggestion is to change the wording from *Sponsor* to *Friends* of the Camino which connotes action as well as fund donation. Steven believes this change would only affect some printed material like membership forms. We could use up the current paper supply that would be costly to discard and then print updated wording on new literature. Computer wording could be changed immediately. Doolittle's committee will discuss and come up with complete list of subcategories under Friend category. Doolittle's motion was seconded by Joyce and passed unanimously.

**Update Dues of Directors:** Bill suggested that to raise funding for the organization, an increase in Board dues from \$1000 for current members and then \$3000 for each year thereafter would help. Steven

explained that it is easier for him to pay monthly than all at one time for his commitment on another board. Any change in the Board donation level will require a vote to amend the by-laws. Jessie mentioned that there are workshops on how to raise organization funds, but the \$500 per workshop attendee was not in our budget. After over 30 minutes of discussion, Bill tabled the discussion.

**Salaries:** With Steven and Paula out of the room, and after discussion, the Board decided to raise Steven's salary to \$90,000/year. Judge Perkins made the motion, it was seconded by Jessie Treviño and was passed unanimously. His salary increase will go into effect October 1, 2024.

### **Chapter and Agency Reports:**

**Trail de Flores Chapter:** See submitted report.

**Ranchería Grande Chapter:** See submitted report. Regarding the diorama, Steven recommends the State of Texas and the Federal Library for photos. Bill reminded the Board that the Texas sesquicentennial is only 12 years away and we should be working towards that event and that we might be able to get money from the legislature to celebrate along the Trail.

**Texas Historical Commission:** Brad Patterson reported that the Commission has submitted its appropriation request to the legislature. It includes purchase money for Presidio La Bahía. They are also asking for staffing positions at the state historic sites and 20 or so administrative positions in-house. Among them is a position for a National Historic Trails person in their Heritage Tourism office. They are also asking for IT staffing and vehicles. The commitment for staffing funds is difficult as it is a long-time commitment.

There is also a request for courthouse restoration funding, an increase to cover inflation, and some expansion for the Texas Heritage Trails Program.

Caddo Mounds officially opened the visitor center in April or May. They are now looking for funding for a theater and war exhibits.

Greg Smith, their National Register coordinator, has retired and Bonnie Tipton was promoted to be the National Register coordinator.

Their Friends are putting on a gala called Food Ways Along the Camino Real on Oct. 9 in Austin at the UT Alumni Center. The gala is concentrating on Native American and Texas Mexican food.

Brad was asked about coordinating fundraisers between our organization and the Commission. Brad replied that their nonprofit wouldn't raise money through us, but they could partner their nonprofit work with us. Jessie was interested in getting grants with the Commission's help. He hoped they might help fill out grant requests to Parks, Foundations, etc. Brad suggested that there might be a scenario where the Friends of both organizations partnered for projects and/or funding that would be mutually beneficial within the mission of both organizations for promoting and developing and protecting travel. Their Friends mission is to raise money for the Commission and develop workshops to help all of their partners and stakeholders. Jessie suggested that we put on the Committee's agenda to follow up with Brad.

**Other:** William Doolittle would like the Board to consider changing our standing committees to ad hoc committees which have individuals dedicated to specific functions. There was some discussion about

this. Steven reminded Bill that the new President usually makes sure that everyone is good with the committees in which they have been serving or seeks to get members into different committees. Bill would like the Board members to think about his suggestion to be discussed at a later meeting.

Jessie made the motion to adjourn the meeting, John seconded, and with all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 2:44 pm.

The next meeting will be held on January 18, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Conner, Secretary