

**El Camino Real de los Tejas
National Historic Trail Association
Board of Directors Meeting
January 24, 2026**

The meeting was called to order on Zoom shortly after 10:00 am by President William (Bill) Doolittle. In attendance were board members Bill Doolittle, Judge Bob Perkins, Ambassador Miguel Ángel Fernández de Mazarambroz, Tom Byrd, John Kisalus, and Joyce Conner. Adam Adams joined around 18 minutes into the meeting and George Hernández joined around 1-½ hours into the meeting. Also present were EICaT Executive Director Steven Gonzales, Brad Patterson (Texas Historical Commission), and Patrick Malone (Superintendent, National Park Service). Absent were board members Jesse Treviño, Bob Ward, and Jay Anna Davis. A quorum was met.

Consideration of Minutes: Joyce asked for consideration of September 27, 2025, minutes. As Joyce's sound system was intermittent, John Kisalus made a motion for approval, Bob Perkins seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial Report: See submitted report. Steven explained that we were just about on budget with everything. They are expecting more individual contributions donated once they redo their association brochure. John and Bill thanked the National Park Service for supporting our organization. John Kisalus moved that we accept the report, Judge Perkins seconded, and the report was unanimously accepted.

Discussion and Vote on Via de la Plata Memorandum of Understanding: See submitted MOU draft. Miguel explained that the people from Via de la Plata are busy with the cultural fair that was inaugurated by the King. They have a lot of interest in our proposal and are waiting to see our memorandum. Bill Doolittle amended the MOU slightly to reflect the current year, to allow each party to separately date their signatures, and to allow both parties to have originally signed documents. He also added EEUU, the Spanish for USA. Bill Doolittle called for a vote on acceptance. Miguel made a motion to accept, Bob Perkins seconded the motion, and the vote to approve was unanimous. Patrick Malone congratulated our association for supporting this relationship between the two associations.

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

Federal Funding: Steven explained that our work with other nonprofits like the Partnership for the National Trail System and the American Hiking Society has led to the success we have had at the Federal level. Together we have convinced legislators that the trails are important to citizens on a bipartisan level. This has led to current funding that is comparable to past funding.

Additional Funding From National Park Service: Patrick Malone explained that it would likely be March before he would know if there was additional funding coming from the Park Service or Department of the Interior that was tied to the staff his department lost. Also, he might also know later whether he could push some of his funding to the associations so that more good trail projects, outreach events, and other activities might be accomplished by us.

State of Texas Funding: Brad Patterson explained that the contract is now awaiting final approvals. Currently, the funding agreement is drafted to go to the end of August 2027. And around that ending date, Brad may try to get the contract completion date extended if needed.

Red Mountain: The Wise name was found on the rock. The Wise family is one of the three families which entered the initial archaeology of the Ranchería Grande.

Steven is talking to the Tribe to plan the next phase of clearance. The mulching and spraying of the emerging yaupon, if done under a contract with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, would allow the Tribe to receive a 65% reimbursement on the cost. This means for 20 acres, they might end up spending about \$11,000 for the combined mulching and spraying.

TAS might decide to do more surveys at Red Mountain this coming summer when they return to continue research at the Apache Pass area.

Bill Doolittle suggested that we press for more archaeological work at Red Mountain especially the additional ~20 acres and that we need the area surveyed. Tamara, Mary Jo, and Ruth Matthews appear to be willing to do that. Steven also said that he has received a report on the archeology, flora, and fauna at the site. Board members asked whether the other landowners' reports were ready to share and Steven said he would inquire about getting them.

NPS Visit to Texas: Carol Clarke and Faith Welty visited several sites with Steven. Among them was Fort Boggy which the team had not previously visited. Courtney Lyons Garcia is the executive director of the Partnership for the National Trail System. She works with the Great Springs Trail which is a path between San Antonio and Austin that mirrors the Camino Real. Great Springs is in the process of creating a multi-mile walking path along a power line corridor in New Braunfels.

Visit from Via de la Plata: We will invite our agency partners to be a part of the visit. Once we know the exact dates, an itinerary will be developed. There may be the possibility to have the Clay property opened for the visit.

Chapter Reports

Trail de Flores Chapter: The chapter is considering participating in the Floresville Peanut Festival parade in 2026 for more visibility. Steven offered the use of an EICaT banner that had been used in a parade in Goliad. Floresville has a Camino Real Trail Committee.

Ranchería Grande Chapter: See submitted report and addendum to report.

National Park Service Report: See submitted presentation.

In addition, Patrick confirmed that it should be 30-45 days before he gets the exact budget allocation figures. Regarding project contracts, unless the projects are related to life, health, safety, or possibly code violations for facilities and assets, they are unlikely to get the support to do any of their contracting requests.

As an incorporated nonprofit organization who can advocate for the trail, EICaT must try to mitigate or prevent some of the negative impacts on the trail, especially where the federal government has no role, and/or has not been invited to participate.

Patrick's office is exploring a new procedure using a standardized signage template that would provide same orientation and interpretive context for each Trail asset but would leave a space for the local tailored content that would be provided by the association or organization concerned. It would be our organization's responsibility to establish relationships with universities, historians, and others who can

produce tailored content that can then be added to individual Wayside signs for later fabrication and installation. Steven suggested that it might be possible to use some of the THC funding to establish that process on Camino Real. Carol Clark is working on what the template might look like along with a guide on how the process would work out with the different associations.

Texas Historical Commission: Brad Patterson reported that on Wednesday (1/18/26?) there is a transfer ceremony for Presidio La Bahia from the Catholic Diocese at 10 a.m..

In the Fall of 2025, at Caddo Mounds, THC signed a memorandum of understanding with the Caddo Nation, the first tribal nation with whom THC has done that. The plan in the future is for another part of the development to include facilities for the Caddo Nation to actually operate repatriation of artifacts and burials from other locations and to do curation and be doing that at a joint facility there at Caddo Mounds. This will facilitate a closer relationship with the Caddo.

At Mission Dolores, they are in the midst of reconstructing a version of the original mission. Some of the palisade walls are already up.

They had an internal reorganization of the agency in October 2025 that affected the operations of historic sites. Officially, his title is no longer Deputy Executive Director (as that title no longer exists). It is now Chief Preservation Officer. For the most part, his responsibilities are the same. He is still a Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer.

Archaeology is now somewhat independent. The archaeologists will not be reporting to him. But parts of their responsibilities are still under Brad.

Dr. Carol Egele is now Chief Operating Officer (same position, just slightly different title). There is a new Chief of Historic Sites. There are three deputies below Joseph Bell, who is THC's Executive Director and the official SHPO.

Within Historic Sites there exists Operations, Museum Support and Services. Brad's part of Operations will still be servicing museums around the State. There are also positions within Historic Sites of Chief Historian (Stephen Cure) and Chief of Interpretation.

The President signed the bill so Interior Appropriations passed. There were line items specific to State Historic Preservation Officer funding, and Congress appropriated and specified level funding for us and for tribal preservation offices. Therefore, THC should have the money to continue operations. However, there is no timeline for the release of funds.

Brad will be in D.C. during Preservation Advocacy Week at the same time as Steven is there for Hike the Hill. He invited Steven to join them for certain visits as his schedule allows.

As there was no **New Business**, Bill asked for a motion to adjourn at 11:51 am. Bob Perkins made the motion, John Kisalus seconded, and the motion was unanimous.

The next Board meeting is expected to be held on May 1 and 2 for the Annual Membership Meeting in Alto, Texas. The final 2026 meeting will be September 19.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Conner, Board Member