

JCHC Bi-Monthly Meeting
Noon, Wednesday, September 27, 2017
JCHC Conference Room

Call to Order – Chair Theresa Goodness – The meeting was called to order by Chair Theresa Goodness at Noon. In attendance were Sarah Bellian, Bill Cummings, Jessie Davis, Bruce Hamilton, Brenda Jackson, Steven Lewis, Mike McGreevy, Les McMahan, Linda McMahan, Paul Prosperie, and Don Smart.

Introduction of Sarah Ballian – Chair Theresa Goodness

Sarah shared after Hurricane Harvey the Museum of the Gulf Coast had been contacted by people / businesses, etc. on how to preserve pictures, papers, and books that were damaged by the storm. Approximately 3,000 pictures were saved as well as many other items. Sarah would like to explore the possibility of the Museum holding a disaster planning and emergency conservation workshop for museums, libraries and local histories. This would include a professional who would speak to people already familiar with the basics. Tentative date would be sometimes in March.

The “Betting, Booze and Brothels” exhibit was a great success and extended for an additional three weeks.

A new exhibit has just started and runs from September 16 – December 30, 2017. “No Man’s Land” is a multimedia project that draws attention to the First World War experiences of East / Southeast Texas African Americans. Included is an exhibit of a variety of unique WWI and WWII items from local collectors, including uniforms and firearms.

Introduction of Bruce Hamilton – Chair Theresa Goodness

Bruce reported on the “Save Texas History Symposium” he attended September 15 – 16, 2017 in Austin. He donated two books received at the Symposium that has been added to the JCHC Library: Escape from Villingen, 1918 by Dwight R. Messimer and Trench Knives and Mustard Gas with the 42nd Rainbow Division in France by Hugh S. Thompson.

Consideration of Minutes of Previous Meeting – Chair Theresa Goodness shared a copy of the July, 2017 JCHC minutes were available at sign-in. A motion was made by Bill Cummings and seconded by Paul Prosperie to accept the Minutes as printed. Motion passed unanimously.

Budget Report – Secretary Linda McMahan shared the new budget year begins October 1, 2017 and through September 30, 2018. We will be operating with the same funds of \$11,600 as in previous years.

Chair's Report – Chair Theresa Goodness reported on Hurricane Harvey damage to markers and the Courthouse. Please see attachment #1.

Coordinator's Report – Linda McMahan reminded everyone to turn in their volunteer hours. All members must turn in at least 50 hours per year.

The exhibit of Larry Baggett's prints in the Mini-Museum will run through October 31, 2017.

Committee Reports

About Town – Steven Lewis Because of interest in the history of fire hydrants, Steven continues to share the history of local fire hydrants. Linda McMahan reported that when she and Les were being evacuated from the Stonegate area of Port Arthur due to Hurricane Harvey, some of the hydrants were being used as benchmarks for the Cajun Navy to know safe areas to travel. Steven also shared information about two historical markers lost due to the current of the Neches River at Riverfront Park.

Archeology Committee – Brenda Jackson reported nothing out of the ordinary was found this summer during the beach nourishment project at McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge. This work replaced some of the sand lost in recent hurricanes and will help prevent salt water from getting into fresh water marshes.

State regional archeologist Dr. Kerry Nichols will speak in Beaumont about the prehistory and archeology of this area, including McFaddin Beach and the recent dune restoration project. The talk will be held on March 8, 2018 at the McFaddin House Visitor Center. The Jefferson County Historical Commission and the McFaddin-Ward House are co-sponsors of the event.

Beaumont Historical Landmark Commission – Jessie Davis – Nothing new to report.

Cemetery Committee – Paul Prosperie and Jimmy Sparks reported that due to Hurricane Harvey the dates of cemetery tours will change. At this time, none will be held until the spring. The tour dates have yet to be determined and it is hoped to include Hebrew Rest.

Courthouse Oversight Committee – Linda McMahan shared there is no new Courthouse project going on at this time. Due to the Hurricane, there will be some repair work in the near future.

Dick Dowling Days / Spindletop Days – Mike McGreevy – Nothing to report.

Marker Committee – Les McMahan reported the St. Paul United Methodist Church marker has been approved by the THC. Because the St. Paul payment was 149 out of 150 on the latest marker list, and inscriptions are written by THC in the order payment is received, it may be a while before a draft inscription is ready for review by the JCHC and the sponsor.

No new inquiries for 2018 markers except for the Cheek Rodeo Association, which is being worked on at this time. (Linda McMahan will check on the status of work on the marker application or if the applicants want to put it on hold this year.)

Port Arthur Landmark Commission – Les McMahan – No meeting to report.

Sam Houston State Library / Early Sports – Don Smart reported the Library is open but closed to the public until November. Inventory work is almost complete on Bill Quick's papers.

Tourism / Ben Rogers Visitors Center – Jessie Davis reported that due to Hurricane Harvey, staff from Ford Park are being housed at the Visitors Center. There is also minor repair work going on at the Visitors Center.

Web Site / Facebook Friends of the JCHC – Jen Trenbeath – No report.

Unfinished Business / New Business – None

Adjournment – Next meeting is scheduled for Noon, Wednesday, November 15, 2017 in the JCHC Conference Room. The meeting was adjourned.

Jefferson County Historical Commission

Report of Theresa Goodness, Chair

September 27, 2017

Hurricane Harvey caused extensive flooding in portions of Jefferson County. In my capacity as Chief Deputy County Clerk, my designation as essential personnel necessitating me working through the storm here at the courthouse.

Parts of the courthouse including the historic 1931 courthouse had minimal water intrusion from windows and doors. There were some leaks in various locations, and maintenance worked around the clock to monitor buckets placed strategically under these small leaks. Also in the basement of the historic courthouse and in the sub-level of the County Clerk's office in the new courthouse it was necessary to use shop vacuums to vacuum up small amounts of water that seeped in where sump pumps were unable to keep up.

Although Riverfront Park suffered damage from the record setting 19.59 ft. flood stage of the Neches River, the water did not get near the courthouse which sits on high ground. Major flood stage is 10 ft. and the next highest historic river crest at Beaumont of 13.00 ft. was on 10/22/1994.

In the county clerk's office after the courthouse reopened, there was mold growing on a stairwell wall which maintenance cleaned and quickly sealed with a mold inhibiting primer.

The sub-courthouse did not have flooding to my knowledge, and the building re-opened at the same time as the main courthouse.

To my knowledge no county records were impacted by the storm, but a significant number of county employees have been impacted through flooding of homes and vehicles, roof damage from windstorm, and through dislocation of themselves, their families, and friends. In the City of Beaumont potable water was unavailable for nine days after the storm, resulting in long lines for bottled water at distribution centers. Some employees were without electrical power for over a week.

We do know of some missing historical markers and some flooding in our cemeteries. It will be necessary to perform another marker inventory across the county to ascertain the extent of damages from Hurricane Harvey.