



JEFFERSON COUNTY

Historical Commission

Theresa Goodness
Chairman

Leslie McMahan
First Vice-Chairman

Linda McMahan
Secretary/Treasurer and Coordinator

Paul Prosperie
Second Vice-Chairman

Ron Ellington
Past Chairman

JCHC Bi-Monthly Meeting Noon, Thursday, July 23, 2015 Ben Rogers Regional Visitors Center 5055 IH-10 South, Beaumont, TX 77705

Call to Order / Greetings – Chair Theresa Goodness welcomed members Sarah Bellian, Bill Cummings, Jessie Davis, Ron Ellington, Bruce Hamilton, Ramona Hutchinson, Steven Lewis, Mike McGreevy, Les McMahan, Linda McMahan, Paul Prosperie, Jef Russell, Don Smart and Jimmy Sparks. Visitors Bill Peavy and Alicia McKibbin also attended.

Consider Minutes of Previous Meeting – Chair Goodness shared the previous meeting minutes of May 27, 2015 were emailed to each member and asked if there were any additions or corrections to be made. There were none. A motion was made by Don Smart and seconded by Bruce Hamilton to accept the minutes as printed. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Linda McMahan shared the 2015-2016 JCHC Budget had been turned into Auditing. Since there were no changes from the 2014-2015 Budget, it was not necessary for Linda to attend Budget Hearings. She brought to the members' attention that only \$73.78 had been spent in the last two months. This year there will be more money remaining in the budget than usual due to cancelled plans for Dick Dowling Days and also no new historical markers were purchased or repaired during this budget year.

Our budget will remain at \$12,850. The JCHC is very fortunate that we don't have to pay rent, utilities, salary or MIS services. Our commissioners are always available for help in storing and installing our historical markers.

Introduction of Speaker – Chair Goodness welcomed our speaker, Alicia McKibbin, Executive Director of the Beaumont Heritage Society (BHS), a community supported non-profit, whose mission is to promote historical education and preservation in the City.

Alicia reported on recent happenings and future plans. She spoke of the John Jay French House which is owned and operated by the BHS and is their primary focus of their preservation efforts. Preservation of the French House (and other endeavors) is accomplished through fundraising events, membership dues and grants. She shared that the BHS had recently received an \$18,150

grant for a new cedar shake roof for the French House, and a \$1,500 grant for needed improvements for the French Visitor Center parking lot.

A new bimonthly Heritage Happy Hour program in partnership with Giglio Distributing has helped BHS membership grow while highlighting historical buildings or exhibits with the added benefit of sampling a variety of craft beers.

Yearly events include the annual Christmas open houses at both the Chambers House and French Museum along with the first annual Easter Egg Hunt. This year a Pumpkin Walk and Haunted Halloween Tour at the French House will be on October 17 from 6 – 8 PM. They will have a hay ride and pumpkins to decorate for the kids. Carved or decorated pumpkins from the community will be on display and voted on by attendees. They will also have the annual Haunted Halloween Tour of the Chambers House in conjunction with the October Heritage Happy Hour on October 22, 2015.

Alicia also reported that Camp Lookinback was a huge success for children ages 6 – 11. Several JCHC members helped with the Camp teaching kids all about life before modern conveniences and electronics.

There was a question and answer period after Alicia's presentation and several JCHC members expressed concern that visitors to our area are having trouble finding the French Museum. Alicia said this is something the BHS is also very concerned about. With all the work on Highway 69, it is hoped when it is completed a more reader friendly map will be made available. Several members shared suggestions for the map.

Coordinator Report – Linda McMahan pleaded with members to remember to turn in their Volunteer Hours. They can be turned in on the form in the hand-out packet, or they can be listed and returned in an email.

There is a Cemetery Workshop and Training on Saturday, September 26, 2015 in Liberty. A form is also included in the members' packet. If you let Linda know by Tuesday, September 15, 2015, the JCHC will pay the \$30 Cover Fee.

Linda also included in the packet a page on Web Access to the Tyrrell Historical Library Resources. There is a large assortment of County historical information available online.

Committee Reports:

Archeology – Brenda Jackson was not in attendance due to helping at Camp Lookinback at the French Museum.

Cemetery – Chair Paul Prosperie had met earlier with Judy Linsley to begin making plans for the second annual Magnolia Cemetery Tour to be held later in the fall. No definite date has been set at this time. The Tour was a great success last year and there will be some historical surprises this year. Paul reported that no new work had been done at the Lincoln Burial Park on LaBelle Road.

Certified Local Government – Linda gave the report for Chair Ramona Hutchinson who arrived late from Camp Lookinback. The CLG has sent to the Texas Historical Commission their

Letter of Intent to apply for a Subgrant for Fiscal Year 2016 in the amount of \$5,000. The completed application is due at THC by November 1, 2015 and Sarah Bellian has offered her help in preparing the grant. The CLG intends to apply for funding to hire a cultural resource consultant or firm who adequately demonstrates they have the resources and qualification to provide the County with a quality County-wide historic survey plan. The THC grant is for \$5,000 with the JCHC supplying \$5,000 matching funds.

Ramona, as CLG representative for Jefferson County, has been informed by Bratten Thomason, Director of the History Programs Division of the Texas Historical Commission, that a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places was recently submitted for the First National Bank of Port Arthur, 501 Procter Street.

Courthouse Oversight – Linda McMahan reported the concurrent projects of replacing the HVAC system and installing a new fire sprinkler system is moving along as planned. The bulk of the work is occurring at this time on the basement and first floors, and work is expected to be completed on these floors by the end of 2015.

The Café in the basement is under new management. It is now called Colin's Kitchen. The new management quickly learned they cannot change paint colors in the historic Courthouse. The first weekend they were in the Courthouse, they painted the Café a bright red-orange. Linda checked with Commissioner Arnold and Maintenance, and the new management was asked to have the Café returned to its original color. Management was very apologetic and had painters come in Monday night and repaint the walls the original color. Everything looks fresh and clean and they have assured the JCHC they will not make any changes without going through the Historical Commission and / or Commissioner Arnold.

Dick Dowling Days – Bruce Hamilton – Nothing new to report.

Historical Markers – Les McMahan – West Beulah Missionary Baptist Church marker dedication was held Sunday, July 19, 2015. There was good community response and several County and State dignitaries attended and spoke.

History Preservation

Texas Treasure Business Awards – Jef Russell – Nothing new to report.

Web Site – Bill Cummings – Nothing new at this time. The MIS County worker has made some necessary changes. If you notice any changes or additions that need to be made, please call Bill or Theresa.

Gilbert Building – Steven Lewis – Nothing new to report.

Sam Houston State Library – Don Smart – If anyone would like to go to the Library on Saturdays to go through Bill Quick's papers, please contact Don.

Magnolia Cemetery – Jimmy Sparks – Nothing new at this time.

Museum of the Gulf Coast – Sarah Bellian – If anyone wants to do Oral Histories, Sarah will be glad to make suggestions and / or assist.

Ben Rogers Visitors Center – Jessie Davis – Summer hours are in effect and lots of visitors are stopping by to pick up travel information and to take advantage of services offered by the Visitors Centers.

Beaumont Landmark Commission – Ramona Hutchinson – The Landmark Commission meets on the second Monday of the month at 3:30 PM in Beaumont City Council Chambers.

Port Arthur Landmark Commission – Les McMahan – The next meeting will be Thursday, August 13th at 2 PM in Port Arthur City Council Chambers. The National Register nomination for the former First National Bank will be discussed in more detail.

Unfinished Business / New Business

Adjournment

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 24, 2015 at the Ben Rogers Visitors Center.