

**North Carolina Historical Commission**  
**Conference Call Minutes**

**June 18, 2024**

The North Carolina Historical Commission (NCHC, Commission) met via Zoom conference call on Tuesday, June 18, 2024. All regular members were in attendance: David Ruffin, Chair; The Honorable Newell Clark; Shana Bushyhead Condill; Dr. David Dennard; Samuel B. Dixon; Barbara Groome; Dr. Valerie A. Johnson; Dr. Susanna Lee; Susan Phillips; W. Noah Reynolds; and Barbara B. Snowden.

Others in attendance were: Dr. Darin Waters, Deputy Secretary for Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR); Ramona Bartos, Director, Division of Historical Resources (DHR); Sarah Koonts, Director, Division of Archives & Records (DAR); Michelle Lanier, Director, Division of Historic Sites and Properties (DSHSP); Maria Vann, Deputy Director, Division of State History Museums (DSHM); John Campbell, Collections Manager, DSHM; Dr. Chris Southerly, State Archaeologist; Christie Norris, DNCR Director of Education; Jeff Adolphson, Senior Restoration Specialist, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); Dan Becker, Hurricane Grant Manager for the SHPO; Robin Walton, Preservation Architect for Hurricane Grant Projects, SHPO; Annette Stone, Hurricane Grant Specialist, SHPO; Parker Backstrom, Office of Archives and History (OAH) administrative assistant and Recording Secretary for the NCHC; and Matt Zeher, Information Technology facilitator.

The meeting was livestreamed on the DNCR website. Copies of all cited written materials can be found in the file for this meeting.

**Call to Order and Conflict of Interest Statement**

Chairman Ruffin called the meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM. He began by announcing the recent passing of ex-long-time NCHC member and former chair, later member emerita, Millie Barbee. He stated for the record how much she personally, and the contributions she has made to celebration and preservation of the history of North Carolina, will be missed. At the chair's invitation Commissioner Snowden made a motion that the Commission recognize Ms. Barbee's contributions to the North Carolina Historical Commission in the form of a resolution to be passed at the fall meeting of the Commission. The motion was seconded by Dr. Johnson and carried by unanimous roll call vote. Ms. Snowden offered to craft the resolution's language.

**Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Dennard moved approval of the minutes from the March 20, 2024, meeting of the NCHC, as written. The motion was seconded by Ms. Phillips. With no discussion the motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote.

**Accessions and Deaccessions of Items in State Collections**

At the chair's invitation, Dr. Waters referenced a list of items recommended by the Office of Archives and History Collections Committee (OAHCC) for accessioned into and deaccessioning out of the collections of the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh (MOH), the Museum of the Albemarle, and the North Carolina Maritime Museums. This list was made available to the commissioners in advance of the meeting. Dr. Johnson, referencing Receipt # R.6683.6, a book titled 'You Can't Hug with Nuclear Arms,' pointed out a typographical error in the description that she asked be corrected. She also suggested that the magazine *Ms.* be added to a list of publications listed as credits for the photographer whose work is featured in the book being accessioned, explaining why she believes this would be appropriate. Mr. Campbell thanked Dr. Johnson for her input and assured her that the edits to the material description will be changed in the record. Commissioner Phillips moved approval of the OAHCC's recommendations. The motion was seconded by Dr. Dennard and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Dr. Waters then cited the items recommended for accessioning into the collection of the DSHSP. With no discussion Ms. Phillips moved approval. Dr. Dennard seconded the motion, and the motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Dr. Waters opened the floor to comments about items recommended for deaccessioning from the collection of the MOH. With no comments forthcoming, Ms. Phillips moved approval of the OAHCC's recommendations. The motion was seconded by Ms. Snowden and carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Lastly, the OAHCC's recommendations for items to be deaccessioned from the collection of the DSHSP were presented for a vote by Dr. Waters. At Dr. Waters's invitation, Ms. Lanier offered rationale for a few of the items being culled from the collection, pointing out that many will simply be transferred into the division's teaching collection. A motion to accept these recommendations was proffered by Dr. Dennard and seconded by Mayor Clark. The motion was the carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

### **President Biden's Executive Order on Recognizing and Honoring Women's History**

As organizer of North Carolina's contributions to the commemoration of America 250, the semi-quincentennial observance of the United States of America's independence, Ms. Koonts directed the commissioners' attention to an Executive Order issued by President Biden that will serve to strengthen the Federal Government's recognition of women's history. She pointed out that DNCR Secretary Reid Wilson serves on a National Park Service (NPS) advisory committee tasked with identifying 10 North Carolina landmarks associated with women's history and welcomes the NCHC to provide its input.

Commissioner Snowden cited the 'Year of the Woman,' a commemoration of women in history that was launched in 2017. She suggested that lists compiled for that observance could be referenced for ideas. Ms. Koonts stated in response to Chairman Ruffin that she is not seeking a resolution of support but rather inviting any ideas that the commissioners might have for North Carolina landmarks.

### **Disaster Relief Subgrant Funding Reallocations Toward Hurricane Recovery Efforts**

Ms. Bartos explained that in January 2020, the SHPO was awarded \$17 million from congressionally appropriated grant funding by the National Park Service to provide recovery assistance to historic properties that were damaged by Hurricanes Florence and Michael that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Up to \$9.25 million was made available for constituent subgrants for bricks and mortar or planning projects to aid historic properties in 61 counties in North Carolina declared eligible for federal disaster funding by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). She reminded the Commission that its role in this process is to vet recommendations from the SHPO and provide any guidance it deems important. Explained Ms. Bartos, of the original allocation of funding from the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund (ESHPF), some of the constituent projects receiving funding went smoothly while others did not. The SHPO is now in a position to reallocate a portion of the funds and comes before the NCHC to seek approval of staff recommendations. Those recommendations, included in written materials that Ms. Bartos provided to the commissioners in advance of this meeting, are:

- Approval to adjust ESHPF grant award funds and administrative line-items through reallocation of appropriate funds as outlined [in a table included in the written materials].
- Waive original grant program requirement for 20 percent match on part of subgrantees for grant funds exceeding \$750,000.
- Authority for the Hurricane Grant Manager in consultation with director of the DHR to make budget revisions of up to 10 percent of the total subgrant amount between subgrant award allocations without prior approval of the NCHC.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ruffin, Ms. Bartos stated that all recommendations can be voted on as a single slate. Ms. Groome moved approval of recommendations, Dr. Johnson seconded the motion, and the motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote.

### **Introduction of New State Archaeologist**

The chair congratulated and recognized Dr. Chris Southerly, former head of the state Underwater Archaeology Branch of the Office of State Archaeology (OSA), who was recently hired as the State Archaeologist, replacing John Mintz. Dr. Southerly offered a brief summary of some of the work that is ongoing in the OSA.

### **Update on the ‘Teaching History’ Committee of the NCHC**

Commissioner Reynolds updated the Commission on efforts to launch the committee formed by Chairman Ruffin to brainstorm tangible ways that the NCHC can advocate for the teaching of public history and stress the importance of knowing history in North Carolina. Mr. Reynolds’ desire is to hold the first meeting of the committee—made up of commissioners Reynolds, Condill, Dennard, Groome, and Phillips—in Raleigh to enable DNCR’s General Counsel and Director of Education, Phil Feagan and Christie Norris, respectively, to participate. Dr. Waters introduced Ms. Norris, who was recently hired to head up the department’s new Education Office. Ms. Norris described her background and offered a PowerPoint presentation describing and showing examples of educational advancement initiatives around the state, broadly called ‘Learning Happens Here.’ Among the things Ms. Norris is heading up is offering opportunities for educators through professional development

and fellowships, such as hosting a three-day, all expenses paid teacher retreat in Beaufort this summer. She feels that the creation of a committee of the NCHC to evaluate ways that it can make substantive contributions to the way that history is taught in North Carolina is very important and timely. Both she and Dr. Waters believe that the DNCR's Education Office and the NCHC's 'Teaching History' committee can partner up to come up with ways to move forward.

Mr. Reynolds expressed his appreciation for the suggestion and together with Mr. Backstrom will work to set up a meeting of the committee and DNCR staff in Raleigh for later in the summer.

### **Reports from Division Directors**

As is standard practice, given that the meeting is being held virtually, each division's "news" was summarized by the directors in written reports which were provided to the commissioners in advance of the meeting. However, as is also standard practice for virtual meetings, those directors in attendance were offered the opportunity to highlight some of those activities in brief remarks.

**Division of State Historic Sites and Properties** – Ms. Lanier reported the receipt of a \$2.5M Duke Endowment Grant in support of the Duke Homestead State Historic Site, the first such gift from a private organization. Ms. Lanier's full, written report about division news and activities can be found both on the NCHC website and in the paper file for this meeting of the NCHC, located in the administrative office of the Office of Archives and History.

**Division of Archives and Records** – Ms. Koonts updated the commissioners on the America 250 Project planning, which includes the publication of a series of four children's books. Ms. Koonts' full, written report about division news and activities can be found both on the NCHC website and in the paper file for this meeting of the NCHC, located in the administrative office of the Office of Archives and History.

**Division of State History Museums** – Ms. Vann updated the Commission on ongoing plans and efforts to move collections, exhibits, and staff out of the MOH in advance of the October 2024 closing of the museum to begin its major renovation project. Ms. Vann's full, written report about division news and activities can be found both on the NCHC website and in the paper file for this meeting of the NCHC, located in the administrative office of the Office of Archives and History.

**Division of Historical Resources** – Ms. Bartos reported having received a synopsis of the response from the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) to requests by the DHR for funding for the upcoming biennium, as the NCGA assembles a proposed state budget. She reported that the House budget does not include support for desperately needed additional staffing in the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Ms. Bartos' full, written report about division news and activities can be found both on the NCHC website and in the paper file for this meeting of the NCHC, located in the administrative office of the Office of Archives and History.

### **Deputy Secretary's Report**

In response to Ms. Bartos' report, Dr. Waters noted that while the State House's proposed budget did not include funding for more staff, Governor Cooper's proposed budget does. He noted that the SHPO is one of the most service oriented and "forward facing" offices in the OAH, which is

why the current staffing shortfall is such an issue and why it needs more support. He invited the commissioners to advocate in any way they can for the SHPO and the support it needs.

### **Other Business**

Dr. Johnson asked to go on the record regarding an important issue that is transpiring regarding land development in a spot in coastal Carteret County known as Cedar Point. She reported that legislation introduced by on Onslow County state representative would permit developers to bulldoze a potential Native American burial ground that was found during early excavation work. The site has been determined by state archaeologists to be one of the most significant archaeological sites identified in North Carolina since the 1990s. A news article from the WRAL News website discussing this issue was handed out to commissioners, along with a summary of the issue that was crafted by Deans Eatman, legislative liaison and Assistant Secretary for Government Affairs for the DNCR. Mr. Eatman's summary cites the legislation—Section 11 of House Bill 385 (Various Energy & Environmental Changes)—describes its potential affects, summarizes what state archaeologists found at the site, outlines the limits the DNCR has to affect any potential outcome, and discusses two primary options moving forward—avoidance and excavation. The DNCR advocates avoidance. Mr. Eatman also notes that the bill additionally would reduce protections for important archaeological and historical resources across Eastern North Carolina. Dr. Johnson asked each commissioner to act in any way they deem supportive of the state's archaeological resources.

### **Chair Announcements**

Mr. Ruffin noted that the next meeting of the NCHC will take place in person in Raleigh on Tuesday, September 17. He expressed his hope that the commissioners will be able to tour the division offices following the meeting, as this courtesy has not been enjoyed by longer serving members for many years and has never been enjoyed by the newer members of the Commission.

### **Adjournment**

Dr. Dennard moved adjournment. Ms. Groome seconded the motion and following a unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

*[A final, post-edit version will be  
presented for a signature]*

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Darin J. Waters