

North Carolina Historical Commission
Conference Call Minutes

March 23, 2022

The North Carolina Historical Commission (NCHC, Commission) met via Zoom conference call on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. The following commissioners were in attendance: David Ruffin, Chair; Dr. Mary Lynn Bryan; the Honorable Newell Clark; Shana Bushyhead Condill; Dr. David Dennard; Samuel B. Dixon; Barbara Groome; Dr. Valerie A. Johnson; Susan Phillips; and Barbara B. Snowden. Commissioner W. Noah Reynolds was absent.

Others in attendance included: 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); Ken Howard, Director of the Division of State History Museums (DSHM); Sarah Koonts, Director, Division of Archives & Records (DAR); Michelle Lanier, Director, Division of State Historic Sites & Properties (DSHSP); Phil Feagan, General Counsel, DNCR; Parker Backstrom, OAH administrative assistant and Recording Secretary of the NCHC; and information technology facilitator Matt Zeher.

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 to order at 2:03 PM. He welcomed those in attendance as well as any members of the public who might be viewing the livestream. As a matter of order, he explained that because this is a virtual meeting, all votes will be taken via voice roll call.

Before proceeding, Mr. Ruffin ask the commissioners, each having had a chance to review the meeting agenda prior to the meeting, whether any had a known or perceived conflict of interest with respect to any of those items. No such concerns were voiced, so the meeting moved forward. To establish that a quorum was present he called roll.

Approval of Minutes

At the invitation of the chairman, Dr. Bryan moved approval of the minutes from the December 8, 2021, regular meeting of the NCHC, as written. The motion was seconded by Dr. Dennard. With no discussion the motion was voted upon and carried unanimously.

Request to Place Plaque at House in the Horseshoe SHS

Ms. Lanier was recognized and explained that a chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution has requested that it be allowed to place a plaque in the House In the Horseshoe State Historic Site recognizing its contributions to the renovations of the site. The specifics of the request,

such as a physical description of the plaque—size, materials, and proposed language—were made available to the commissioners in advance of the meeting, but she summarized them, as well as described the location where the plaque would be placed. She confirmed that this request had been approved at the site and division levels and is thereby requesting approval by the NCHC. Ms. Phillips moved approval of the request. The motion was seconded by Mr. Clark. With no discussion the motion was voted upon via roll call and carried unanimously.

Accessions and Deaccessions of Items in State Collections

Mr. Ruffin ceded the floor to Dr. Waters, who referred the commissioners to the annotated list of items recommended for accessioning into and deaccessioning out of collections in the DSHM and DSHSP by the Office of Archives and History Collections Committee (OAHCC). A copy of this list was made available to the commissioners in advance of the meeting. As has become standard practice, he requested that the accession items be considered as a single slate for voting purposes.

• **Accession of items into NC Museum of History in Raleigh, Museum of the Albemarle, the Maritime Museums, and State Historic Sites** – At Dr. Waters’ request Mr. Howard, who serves on the OAHCC, briefly summarized the items that body wishes to accession into collections at the Museum of History, the Museum of the Albemarle, and the Maritime Museums. Mr. Howard then recognized Ms. Lanier who summarized the items pertaining to the DSHSP. There were no questions and no discussion, so Ms. Snowden made a motion to accept the slate of recommendations by OAH staff as presented. Dr. Dennard seconded the motion, and the recommended accessions were approved by unanimous roll call vote.

• **Deaccession of items out of the Museum of History and State Historic Sites** – Mr. Howard and Ms. Lanier summarized the short list of items recommended by the OAHCC for deaccessioning from their respective collections and described the recommended disposition of those items. With no discussion forthcoming, Dr. Johnson moved approval of staff recommendations and Ms. Phillips seconded that motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Deaccession of Items from State Archives

Chairman Ruffin recognized Ms. Koonts who referred the commissioners to the written descriptions of three sets of records recommended for deaccessioning from State Archives and explained the reason why the requests are being made, as well as explained the proposed forms of disposal. The materials are from the departments of Crime Control and Public Safety, Insurance, and Public Instruction. Once again, no questions or discussions were forthcoming, so a motion to approve staff recommendations was proffered by Dr. Dennard and seconded by Mayor Clark. The motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Reports from Division Directors

Division of Archives and Records – Ms. Koonts offered a verbal summary of a fuller, written report provided to the commissioners in advance of the meeting. She touched upon the resumption of in-person, constituent tours of the archives and the expansion of outreach efforts through such varied means as webinars and “trivia nights.” She also highlighted collaborative efforts with other offices within the DNCR and described the expansion of the DAR’s oral history program.

Ms. Koonts devoted much of her time to a report on the status of America250 planning, which was only touched upon in her written report. She reported that the commemoration will commence in April 2024, with an examination of the Halifax Resolves, and will run through the year 2032. She described the three thematic statements upon which programming will center: Visions of Freedom, A Gathering of Voices, and Common Ground, themes that will encapsulate the entirety of North Carolina and its citizens. She described planned marketing, promotion, and outreach efforts, including a description of some of the exhibits that will be offered.

Ms. Koonts concluded her report by addressing a question by Dr. Dennard.

Division of State Historic Sites and Properties – Ms. Lanier offered a summary of a more detailed, written report provided to the commissioners in advance of the meeting. In her summary she stated that the division is experiencing a period of prolific progress resulting from the historic \$47 million appropriation to the DSHSP from the most recent biennial budget passed by the North Carolina General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Cooper. She also reported upon public engagement in the form of visitation to historic sites and outreach activities, commended the underappreciated craft services department for its work, and outlined some of the activities and sites that took place during the just-concluded Black History Month. Finally, she reported that the infusion of appropriated funding will enable the division to restore some positions that were lost during the height of the pandemic.

Division of State History Museums – Mr. Howard referred the commissioners to the written report he provided in advance of the meeting, touching on some of the highlights within that report, supported by a PowerPoint presentation he shared in real time. He summarized visitation numbers for the cadre of the state's history museums as well as the number of participants in digital programming. He summarized some of the exhibits that staff have developed and some that are still in the planning stages, reported on the 21st Annual African American Cultural Celebration that the MOH hosted in late January, and touched upon activities and plans at the North Carolina Maritime Museums. He also went into some detail about the progress being made on the renovated Museum of the Cape Fear Historical Complex, which is being redeveloped into what is tentatively being called the Civil War & Reconstruction History Center. Mr. Howard concluded by presenting architectural renderings of the completely redesigned Museum of History in downtown Raleigh, upon which construction is set to begin in June 2023.

Division of Historical Resources – Ms. Bartos presented a synopsis of her written report, provided to the commissioners prior to the meeting. She described division-wide staffing changes that have taken place since the last meeting of the NCHC and summarized some of the activities and happenings in the DHR's constituent offices: the Western Office, the Office of State Archaeology, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Historical Research Office. Of note is the legislative extension of the state historic tax credits program from 2024 to 2030 for both income-producing and residential properties, as well as the unexpected resurrection of tax credits for the redevelopment of historic mills, and industrial, utility, and agricultural buildings. She thanked the commissioners for their collective support of the work being done within her division.

Concluding Thoughts

Chairman Ruffin reminded everyone that the next meeting of the Commission will take place on June 22. He closed by recognizing the work and dedication of not only DNCR staff but also of the commissioners themselves.

Dr. Johnson went on the record to commend the North Carolina Opera for its World Premiere in early March of 'Sanctuary Road,' which was based on the writing of William Still, a former enslaved person who helped over 800 enslaved people find their own freedom via the Underground Railroad. It was an opportunity taken, she said, to lift up history in a way that connected to the arts. She also noted that in connection with this premier, MOH curator Earl Ijames, assisted by Angela Thorpe, director of the African American Heritage Commission, led two panel presentations about the Underground Railroad at Shaw University.

Finally, Dr. Waters expressed his appreciation for his team in the OAH, citing the work and commitment of the division directors and their staffs.

Adjournment

With business concluded Ms. Phillips moved that the meeting be adjourned. Dr. Dennard seconded the motion and the motion to adjourn was passed unanimously on a roll call vote. The meeting concluded at 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Darin J. Waters