

METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC)

MINUTES

October 19, 2020

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held an electronic meeting on October 19, 2020 with Commission Chair Clay Bailey presiding.

Commissioners Present: Dr. Clay Bailey, Chair; Davis Acker, Dr. Jhennifer Amundson, Pamela Bobo, Christopher Cotton, Dr. Don Cusic, Jim Hoobler, Lynn Maddox, Dr. Bill McKee, Chakita Patterson, Gerry Searcy, E. Thomas Wood, and Linda Wynn, **were present.**

Staff Members Present: Jessica Reeves, Caroline Eller, and Scarlett Miles were present.

Guests Present: Metro Attorney Alex Dickerson, ITS Charda Johnson

Chair Dr. Clay Bailey called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m. after verifying that a quorum was present.

Alex Dickerson informed the Commission about changes made to Executive Order No. 16, which went into effect on October 1st. The meeting must be livestreamed, a recording must be made available to the public and anyone observing the meeting must be able to tell who is speaking. This can be achieved by the commissioners using video, announcing themselves as they begin speaking or by being recognized by Chair Bailey by name before they speak.

Commissioner Cotton made a motion that the proposed agenda constitutes essential business and that meeting electronically is necessary to maintain the health, safety and well-being of citizens due to the pandemic. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Cusic. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Dr. Clay Bailey

Chair Bailey presented the February minutes for approval. Commissioner McKee made a motion to approve the minutes, Commissioner Wynn provided a second, and the February minutes were approved, with Commissioners Amundson and Bobo abstaining, as that meeting was held before their terms began. Chair Bailey presented the June minutes for approval. Commissioner Cusic moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Wynn provided a second, and the June minutes were approved, with Commissioners Amundson and Bobo abstaining. Chair Bailey presented the July minutes for approval. Commissioner Cusic made a motion to approve the minutes, Commissioner Acker seconded, and the July minutes were approved, with Commissioners Amundson and Bobo abstaining. Chair Bailey presented the September minutes for approval. Commissioner Wynn made a motion to

approve the minutes, Commissioner Cusic seconded, and the September minutes were approved, with Commissioners Acker, Amundson and Bobo abstaining.

HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Jessica Reeves*

Jessica presented the proposed Samuel Smith marker to the Commission. She said it would be a marker about the lynching of Samuel Smith, placed in the Cane Ridge neighborhood and funded by MHC through the Marker Project fund. She began by presenting a map showing the proposed marker location on Old Burkitt Rd, where the lynching took place in 1924. The tree is still standing near this location. Jessica provided some context for the marker by discussing the three primary people involved in this event—Samuel Smith, Eugene Smith (Sam’s uncle) and Ike Eastwood, the Nolensville grocer who was shot. Samuel Smith was also injured and taken to Nashville General Hospital. The next day, a group of men took Samuel Smith out of the hospital and hung him from the tree at the previously described Cane Ridge location. Ike Eastwood was in the hospital in fair condition and gave an interview about the lynching, but then died on December 18th from his injuries. There was a grand jury investigation into the lynching, but nobody was ever arrested or charged. Jessica showed the text for this historical marker, which follows a similar format to the Equal Justice Initiative markers that were done in the past. Side one provides a general overview of Racial Terror Lynchings in America and side two gives details of the lynching of Samuel Smith. Chair Bailey explained that the marker text came after considerable work by MHC staff and with input from the community and We Remember Nashville. He introduced Twana Chick, the President of the Cane Ridge Community Club, who detailed five concerns of the community—the Smith family has not been consulted; the family of Ike Eastwood has not been consulted; CM Rutherford has not been involved but should be; the property owner of the location is in opposition; and Mr. Eastwood is buried right around the corner from this location and the family is concerned about the graveyard. Ms. Chick stated that they are not opposed to a marker, but they request a deferral of the vote so meetings with the community can be held. Commissioner Cotton asked if this was the marker that Commissioners received calls about in the summer. Chair Bailey said that Judy Morgan, who is an Ike Eastwood relative, had contacted Commissioners about this and then spoke to Tim about it. Jessica also stated that CM Styles said she had contacted CM Rutherford and the property owner (Village Church) and they were both on board with the marker. Commissioner Cotton expressed his concern about not having support in writing from CM Rutherford or the church and suggested deferring the vote. Chakita asked for clarification about why the vote would be postponed. John Stern, founder of Cane Ridge Community Trust, asserted his support of a marker and the deferral of the vote through his call into the meeting. He cited concerns about undercurrents of racism and denial in the church and the developer community, but he hopes for a path forward. CM Styles called in to express her support for the marker. She stated that she has worked with the Village Church Head Pastor, Travis Garner, and CM Rutherford and they are both supportive of the Samuel Smith marker. CM Styles implored the MHC to vote Yes for the marker, so the history of all of Nashville’s communities can be acknowledged, even if it is uncomfortable. Commissioner Cotton expressed support for the marker, but he wants to delay the vote to allow for more transparency and public input. Commissioner Wynn clarified with Jessica that the marker will be placed in the right-of-way.

Commissioner Wynn said that not acknowledging uncomfortable historical events interferes with the ability to have brutally honest conversations about race. She recommended that the vote be deferred until written letters of support from CM Rutherford and Village Church are received, and then the marker should be approved. CM Styles confirmed that community meetings have been held since July and there has been ample opportunity for the community to engage in this process if they so desired. Commissioner Wood made a motion to defer the vote until the Commission can meet in person and hear community members in person. After a partial roll call vote, Commissioner Wood withdrew his motion. Jessica informed the Commission that one more lynching marker will be presented to the MHC in the future regarding a lynching in Bellevue in 1892. Commissioner Wynn made a motion to approve the marker today with the condition that letters of support from Village Church and CM Rutherford will be received by October 21st. Commissioner Bobo seconded. A roll call vote was taken with a final tally of 8 yes votes and 4 no votes. The motion passed with conditions.

With no further business to discuss, Commissioner Cusic moved to adjourn, and Commissioner Wynn seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, October 19, 2020.

Susie Pallas