

METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES

September 18, 2023

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held a meeting in the Community Room of the Midtown Hills Police Precinct on September 18, 2023, with Vice Chair Laura Rost presiding.

Attendance

- Commissioners:** Dr. Clay Bailey, Menié Bell, John Bridges, Dr. Don Cusic, Jim Hoobler, Dr. Jane Landers, Lynn Maddox, Dr. Bill McKee, Dr. Marisa Richmond, Laura Rost, Gerry Searcy, Tom Wood, and Larry Woods **were present**.
- Dr. Celso Castilho and Linda Wynn **were not present**.
- Staff Members:** Tim Walker, Caroline Eller, Dr. Adam Fracchia, Russell LeSturgeon, Scarlett Miles, and Jessica Reeves **were present**.
- County Historian:** Dr. Carole Bucy **was not present**.
- Guests:** Dr. Lydia Simpson, Fletch Coke, Clélie Cottle Peacock, Graham Perry.

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND WELCOME – *Laura Rost*

In the absence of Chair Linda Wynn, Vice Chair Laura Rost called the meeting to order at approximately 12:06 p.m. and verified that a quorum was present through a Roll Call of attendance.

II. GUEST SPEAKER – *Dr. Lydia Simpson, New South Associates, Inc.*

“Forgotten, but not Gone: Finding Davidson County’s Cemeteries” - Dr. Lydia Simpson, Senior Historian with New South Associates, updated the MHC with findings from Phase II of the Davidson County Cemetery Survey (DCCS) grant project. Phase II surveyed cemeteries in subareas 1, 2, 4, and 10 (Joelton, Parkwood/Union Hill, Madison/Goodlettsville, and Green Hills/Midtown communities). Dr. Simpson reviewed the purpose of the survey, introduced the survey team (including archaeologist Clélie Cottle Peacock, present today), reviewed examples of the four cemetery types identified in Davidson County, noted case studies with some preservation predicaments, and identified preservation possibilities. The team managed to visit 114 of the 117 cemeteries attempted for study.

MHC members asked several questions related to the use of vinca as a ground cover, presence of pre-Colombian burials, enslaved burials, legal issues (i.e., removing gravestones), and funding for restoration. MHC staff member Caroline Eller and NSA team member Peacock assisted with answering questions. Vice Chair Rost also introduced guest Fletch Coke who led the first DCCS and has managed its records over the years. She also introduced Graham Perry, who oversees the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Preservation Program at the Tennessee Historical Commission.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *Laura Rost*

Vice Chair Rost presented the August 2023 meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Landers made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Hoobler provided a second. The commission unanimously approved the August 2023 minutes. Vice Chair Rost noted that items VI and VII from the August meeting are not ready for presentation during today's meeting as anticipated, and the appropriate committees will present these items to the MHC at the October meeting.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – *Laura Rost*

Vice Chair Rost opened the floor for Public Comment. No members of the public requested time to speak.

V. VOTE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SALARY INCREASE – *Laura Rost*

At the August 2023 meeting, the MHC voted to increase Executive Director Tim Walker's salary by \$25,000 to better align with the directors of similar departments. [As a reminder, the salary increase of \$25,000 was included in the department's Metro Council-approved budget for FY24, which runs from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.] Now, the MHC needs to vote on the effective date for the salary increase, which is to be retroactive to July 1, 2023.

Upon motion of Commissioner Hoobler, seconded by Commissioner Bell, the salary increase of \$25,000, retroactive to July 1, 2023 [the start of the fiscal year], was unanimously approved for the Executive Director.

VI. VOTE: HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Jessica Reeves*

- a) Prior to Jessica Reeves starting the presentation, Commissioner Bell commended Reeves for her impressive representation of the MHC at marker dedications and other events.
 - i. "Woodmont"/Woodmont Christian Church – this marker will be placed on the church campus at 3601 Hillsboro Pike. Upon motion of Commissioner Maddox, seconded by Commissioner Hoobler, the commission unanimously approved the historical marker for "Woodmont"/Woodmont Christian Church.
 - ii. Russ McCown (1929-1994) "Sir Cecil Creape" – this marker will be placed in the Richland-West End Neighborhood where McCown resided during his portrayal of Sir Cecil Creape, hopefully near his former home at 3712 Richland Avenue (as yet unconfirmed). MHC members enjoyed sharing memories of Sir Cecil. Upon motion of Commissioner Richmond, seconded by Commissioner Bridges, the commission unanimously approved the historical marker for Russ McCown aka Sir Cecil Creape.
 - iii. Nashville Christian Institute – this marker will be placed near the last remaining structure from the school formerly located at 801 24th Avenue North. Commissioner Bridges inquired if the character count would allow a text change from "over 500" to "more than 500." Reeves agreed to make this change. Upon motion of Commissioner Bridges, seconded by

Commissioner Landers, the commission unanimously approved the historical marker for Nashville Christian Institute.

- b) Updates on damaged markers: The Jungle/Juanita's marker downtown has been knocked down (circumstances unknown). We are in the process of returning it to Sewah for repairs. As previously reported, we have ordered a replacement for the stolen/removed Samuel Smith marker. The current timeframe at Sewah for new/replacement markers is six to twelve months. Reeves is currently exploring ways to prevent future damage to this marker.
- c) Upcoming marker dedications: Hank Snow's Rainbow Ranch, October 21, and Washington Junior High, October 23 – MHC staff will share details for each event once available.
- d) Misc. inquiries: Commissioner McKee relayed a question he recently received about a potentially missing marker for French Lick. Reeves will research this and will answer this question separately.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT– *Tim Walker*

- a) Director Walker thanked ITS/Metro Nashville Network (MNN) for video recording the presentation by New South Associates. MHC staff will post the recording to our website, and it will be available on the Metro Government YouTube channel. Walker also recognized Caroline Eller for leading the Davidson County Cemetery Survey Update grant project and her work with Metro legal and state partners.
- b) This meeting is possibly the last MHC meeting for Commissioners Bridges, Maddox, Searcy, and Wood, unless they are reappointed by Metro Council. Due to the timing of appointments, we expect to have a smaller board in October and possibly in November.
- c) The MHC tour of Sunnyside will take place on Thursday, October 12 at 3:30 p.m. MHC staff will follow up with details. Director Walker is giving a similar tour to Vice Mayor Henderson, Metro Parks Director Monique Odom, and Parks Board members later today.
- d) Historic Zoning Administrator Robin Zeigler was not present to provide a verbal report on Historic Zoning business. Vice Chair Rost asked if any commissioners had questions about Zeigler's submitted report that Director Walker could answer. No questions.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

IX. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Commissioner Bell praised the amount of information being uncovered at Sunnyside, particularly regarding archaeology, and she is looking forward to the interpretation of the site. Walker agreed that the new findings are exciting and acknowledged staff archaeologist Dr. Adam Fracchia for his work.

- b) Commissioner Maddox recommended *Strong Inside*, a powerful play about the life of Perry Wallace, at Nashville Children's Theater. [A student-athlete at Vanderbilt University, Wallace integrated varsity basketball in the Southeastern Conference in 1967.]

X. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Rost called for adjournment. Commissioner McKee made a motion to adjourn, and Commissioner Bridges provided a second. With a unanimous vote, the meeting ended at approximately 1:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Monday, October 16, 2023.

Scarlett C. Miles