

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
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METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES November 20, 2023

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held a meeting at the Howard Office Building Sonny West Conference Center on November 20, 2023, with Chair Linda Wynn presiding.

Attendance

Commissioners: Dr. Clay Bailey, Dr. Don Cusic, Jim Hoobler, Dr. Bill McKee, Dr. Marisa Richmond, Laura Rost, Larry Woods, and Linda Wynn were **present**.

Menié Bell, Dr. Celso Castilho, and Dr. Jane Landers were **not present**.

Staff Members: Tim Walker, Caroline Eller, Dr. Adam Fracchia, Bryan Gilley, Russell LeSturgeon, Scarlett Miles, Jessica Reeves, Dustin Summers, and Robin Zeigler were **present**. Ann Mikklesen (Metro Legal) was **present**.

County Historian: Dr. Carole Bucy was **present**.

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND WELCOME – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Linda Wynn called the meeting to order at approximately 12:03 p.m. and verified that a quorum was present through a Roll Call of attendance. As there are only eleven commissioners serving this month due to four unfilled vacancies, quorum is six.

II. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER MEETING MINUTES – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn presented the October 2023 meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Rost made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Hoobler provided a second. The commission unanimously approved the October 2023 minutes.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn opened the floor for Public Comment. No members of the public were present to request time to speak.

IV. VOTE: BYLAWS REVISION – *Chair Linda Wynn*

The MHC Executive Committee has met with Director Walker and Metro Attorney Ann Mikkelsen to revise and update the MHC’s bylaws and policies. [MHC staff sent a draft of the revisions to commissioners for their review on Friday, November 3, 2023.] Regarding a typo on page 5 under Section V(C)(3), Ms. Mikkelsen advised inserting “on the” into the phrase, “The Commission will instruct the Executive Director directives and policies,” between the words “Director” and “directives,” so the phrase reads as, “The Commission will instruct the Executive Director **on the** directives and policies...”

Regarding Section IV(G) (Attendance), Commissioner McKee inquired about absences and the power of the chair to excuse commissioners from meetings. Ms. Mikkelsen clarified that the policy is meant to be permissive and not mandatory.

Commissioner Rost asked about the previously mentioned proposed amendment to page 5 of the document, inquiring if “through” was used in a previous version and not “on the.” After discussion, it was determined that “through” was the preferred amendment, so the amended phrase will read as, “The Commission will instruct the Executive Director **through** directives and policies...”

Commissioner Cusic made a motion to approve the revisions as amended, which Commissioner Rost seconded. The commission unanimously approved the revised bylaws and policies as amended.

V. VOTE: HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Jessica Reeves*

Historical Markers presented for review (in reverse Agenda order):

- A. Callie Guy House (1861-1928) – This marker will be placed around 1605 10th Avenue South in Edgehill, near where the House home was located. The site is near public housing and new construction, so the final location has yet to be determined. The MHC Foundation funded this marker. Since the draft text was sent to commissioners last week, a text change was proposed, substituting “Enslaved at birth” instead of “Born enslaved” in the opening sentence. The birth/death dates will be included on the marker with the title. Upon motion of Commissioner Richmond, seconded by Commissioner Rost, the commission unanimously approved the historical marker for Callie Guy House.

- B. Professor Bailey (1831-1917) – This marker will be placed at 2000 Greenwood Avenue, presently home to the Nashville Classical Charter School but formerly known as Bailey Junior High School (inscription still present). The marker will have lots of visibility at this prominent corner in Eastwood. Like the Callie Guy House marker, this one will have the same birth/death dates format. Commissioner Bailey, who is the marker sponsor, noted a text change from the draft, replacing “from” with “in” and removing “to

1917” from the second sentence. Commissioner McKee asked if Professor Bailey should be the title of the marker or if it should include his full name (which is found in the body of the marker text). Commissioner Bailey expressed that he was fine with the wording either way, but the use of Professor Bailey was intentional as that is how John E. Bailey was known and how music instructors were regarded in that era. Professor Bailey was Commissioner Bailey’s great-great-grandfather. Commissioner Bailey inquired if he should abstain from the vote; Ms. Mikkelsen advised that he did not have to if he could be impartial. Upon motion of Commissioner McKee, seconded by Commissioner Cusic, the commission unanimously approved the historical marker for Professor Bailey.

Commissioner Bailey expressed that he has been talking about this marker for years and was glad to be prompted by the increase in marker costs to finally move forward. He is looking forward to the marker dedication.

VI. GUEST SPEAKER: *Pirates of the Slave Trade* - Dr. Angela Sutton

Dr. Angela Sutton, research assistant professor in the Department of Communication of Science and Technology at Vanderbilt University and Assistant Dean of Graduate Education and Academic Affairs in the College of Arts & Science as well as Board Member of the Friends of Fort Negley, spoke to the commission about her new book *Pirates of the Slave Trade: The Battle of Cape Lopez and the Birth of an American Institution*. Dr. Sutton introduced John Conny, a charismatic leader of the Akan people; the infamous pirate Black Bart; and British naval captain Chaloner Ogle, three historical figures whose fates converged in 1722 at the Battle of Cape Lopez. Briefly touching on the complex network of empire-, private-, and pirate-trafficked trade routes that spanned the Atlantic Ocean at the time, Dr. Sutton’s research demonstrates how this battle off the coast of West Africa reshaped the trade of enslaved peoples in ways that affect America to this day. Dr. Sutton’s work also has implications for ongoing research, including oral history and archaeology, related to Fort Negley.

VII. DIRECTOR’S REPORT– *Tim Walker*

- a. Downtown Historical Markers: The Nashville Department of Transportation (NDOT) is currently undertaking an assessment of the height and location of historical markers, primarily those located downtown, after an individual hit their head on a historical marker downtown. Through the incident, it was discovered that markers (and other signage) should be placed with the base of the marker at a height of 7ft. Sewah, the marker fabricating company, has 10ft marker posts, which should work for markers that need to be reinstalled at a new height. We will not know the projected cost for the post replacement project until the assessment is complete. Hopefully NDOT can share in some of this cost and complete the replacement work. Six years ago, there were over 50 markers in District 19, which includes downtown.

- b. Staff Update: Director Walker introduced Bryan Gilley, the new Nashville City Cemetery Site Manager, and updated on work Mr. Gilley has been doing at the NCC since starting with the office a couple of weeks ago, including efforts to establish an office on-site. Mr. Gilley introduced himself to the commission.
- c. Sunnyside Construction Update: Director Walker is speaking with Vice Mayor Henderson and Mayor O'Connell's office about 4% funds to cover appliances, furniture, window coverings, interior painting, carpet, and other shortfalls from the initial budget. A 4% funding of \$300,000 should cover these outstanding items. The project is currently on track for the office to be ready to open in April 2024.
- d. President James K. Polk/City Cemetery: Commissioner McKee expressed concern about the lack of a historical marker indicating the former burial site of President James K. Polk in Nashville City Cemetery. Director Walker stated that it should be included in the interpretive signage prepared with Fletch Coke several years ago. Commissioner McKee asked Ms. Reeves to add a marker for this to the running list of potential markers. Director Walker added that Mr. Gilley can also note it on the conditions assessment. Commissioner Hoobler stated that there is a stone bearing the initials "J.K.P." in the Grundy lot, marking the President's first, albeit very brief, resting place.
- e. Citizens Historic Preservation Academy: Commissioner Bailey asked if the graduation program was recorded and if there is a list of the buildings showcased by the participants. Robin Zeigler said the presentations were not recorded; however, she is happy to share the list of presented properties. Ms. Zeigler reported that everyone seemed to enjoy the program. Guests included Mayor O'Connell, MHC and MHZC commissioners, Councilmember Preptit, and Trustee Gilmore. Several commissioners reported hearing positive feedback about the course.

VIII. HISTORIC ZONING REPORT – *Robin Zeigler*

Historic Zoning Administrator Zeigler stated that she had nothing to report beyond what was included in the Director's Report. No commissioners had additional questions.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Wynn opened the floor for Other Business:

- a. Davidson County Historian Dr. Carole Bucy reported that the Bicentennial of the Farewell Tour of the Marquis de Lafayette is approaching [nationally July 1824-September 1825, locally May 3-5, 1825]. She has encouraged local chapters of the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution (S.A.R. and D.A.R.) to take charge in planning commemorative events for this area. Also, she recently spoke with someone who expressed the need for a marker at the World War II Classification Center located near 100 Oaks. Additionally, she recently visited the 8th Avenue Reservoir to discuss Metro Water's plans for a Water Department Museum at the site.

She expressed concerns about the copper wire theft at City Cemetery and concerns about the disastrous conditions in the historic section of Mount Olivet Cemetery.

- b. Caroline Eller encouraged the commission to mark their calendars for the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture (NCAAHC), which is scheduled to return in person, with a hybrid virtual option, on Friday, February 9, 2024, at Tennessee State University's Avon Williams Campus downtown. We will advise the commission once registration is open. Chair Wynn noted the program will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision and the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

X. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Wynn opened the floor for other Comments/Announcements:

- a. Morris Memorial Building: Commissioner Richmond mentioned the recent *Nashville Scene* story about Morris Memorial. She and Chair Wynn are on a committee organized through the Human Relations Commission that was working toward a plan to try to get Metro to buy the property for use as Metro offices and a museum. However, it was not placed in the Capital Budget prior to the elections, and the property owner – National Baptist Convention (NBC) – has decided to move forward with selling it to a hotel developer. The committee was blindsided by the plan last week. They [NBC] did not know there was an effort for Metro to purchase the building and they signed the contract last week. Things are still up in the air, as CM Suara is meeting with Mayor O'Connell's office to see if it can be included in the Capital Budget or how Metro Council could move forward with purchasing the property. Something will have to happen within the next month. Chair Wynn added that she is filming an interview about the building tomorrow, set up through the Human Relations Commission. The Human Relations Commission has also reached out to Patrick McIntyre, Executive Director of the Tennessee Historical Commission, and Chair Wynn will be meeting with him this week. In summary, there is a lot going on. Chair Wynn believes Nashville does not want an African American History Museum, but she is trying to remain hopeful that something will come to fruition in terms of the Morris Memorial Building and that it will be preserved, although a boutique hotel is better than demolition.
- b. Then and Now: Nashville's LGBTQI+ Community: Commissioner Richmond is one of the panelists for this program presented by Vanderbilt University and hosted by Nashville Public Library on Wednesday, December 6, from 6:00-8:00 pm. Dr. André L. Churchwell, Senior Advisor on Inclusion and Community Outreach, Vanderbilt University, and Sarah Calise, founder of Nashville Queer History, will moderate the program. [Dr. Churchwell is one of the scheduled presenters for the 2024 NCAAHC.]
- c. Presidential Advisory Commission: On Thursday, October 26, Commissioner Richmond was sworn in by Vice President Harris and Secretary of Education Cardona as a member of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing

Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans. After the ceremony, President Biden met with Commissioner Richmond and the group and invited them to the Oval Office. The Advisory Commission's report is due in October 2024.

- d. *Nashville*: Commissioner Bailey mentioned the upcoming 50th anniversary of the movie *Nashville* as something to think about.
- e. City Cemetery Tours: Commissioner Hoobler recently provided two tours of the City Cemetery. Also, Channel 5 (WTVF) interviewed him this morning about Estes Kefauver, the Estes Kefauver Federal Courthouse, and plans to deaccession the building.
- f. Nashville Music History Lecture Series: Scarlett Miles mentioned Commissioner Cusic's next session in the ongoing Curb Lecture Series is scheduled for Wednesday, December 6, and will focus on The Beatles and Country Music. The session will start at 6:00 pm at RCA Studio B.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McKee moved for adjournment, seconded by Commissioner Cusic. Chair Wynn wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving. The meeting ended at approximately 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Monday, December 18, 2023.
Scarlett C. Miles