

Historical Advisory Committee (HAC)

Minutes October 11, 2023

Meeting held at Centennial Park in Port Charlotte

Committee Members

Valerie Colbert
Dianne Munson
Theresa Murtha
Clare Riggs
Pat Spence
Stephen Valdes

Present

Theresa Murtha
Valerie Colbert
Clare Riggs
Pat Spence
Dianne Munson

Not Present

Stephen Valdes

BOCC Liaison: Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch

Libraries & History Staff

Jennifer Zoebelin, Joe Guerso

Public Attendees

Gene Murtha

Roll Call

All present except Stephen Valdes

Approval of September Minutes

- Clare calls to approve minutes, Valerie seconds it. They are approved.

All changes to the ordinance were approved.

- Jennifer received the updated ordinance, and all the changes were included.
- Dianne asks to see a copy. Jennifer says she will bring copies in next time.

Update on Historical Markers

- Jennifer says the New Point Comfort marker has been ordered and they are on a 6–9-month time frame for delivery.
- The 3 damaged markers are Howard Homestead, Hickory Bluff Pioneers and Bailey Cemetery (a crack was found at the base). Jennifer says a purchase order was put in. The cost is over \$5,000, but an exception was made so we could work with the same company. After approval, the order will be placed.
- She says she has to work with the city of Punta Gorda on the Punta Gorda Hotel marker. She has been trying to contact someone about it. Pat suggests contacting Lisa Hannan.

The Bunkhouse

- There was an email to the Commissioners from a Placida resident asking about the county's plans for the Bunkhouse.
- Jennifer sent him the following information: It was received by the county in 2005 and was falling apart. It was stabilized for its first move in 2005 and the second move in 2007. Additional stabilization was done from 2011 to 2013.
- Currently, there are supports in the building to prevent collapse.
- Commissioner Deutsch mentions the email asks about restoration. We did rehabilitation, but a restoration is probably 4 or 5 times more expensive. Restoration means restoring it to its original condition.
- Jennifer says there was a preservation study done in 2017. At that time, the estimated cost was over \$200,000 to do a basic restoration. The HAC tried to do some funding, but there was no public interest.
- As of now, we have to do a structural assessment to determine stability. Jennifer is in contact with some of the Community Services Project Managers to get a survey done. Commissioner Deutsch asks to be included in the emails.
- Theresa asks about the significance of the building. Jennifer says it is possibly, the last railroad section house left in South Florida and maybe the state. It was originally built in 1907, but additions were added in the 40's and 50's.
- It is significant, but preservation and restoration are two separate things.
- Technically, we are preserving it. The question is: How much of the original building can be used to do a restoration? If restoring it means compromising its integrity, then that takes away its value.
- Theresa asks about getting grant funding. Jennifer's predecessors applied for funding multiple times but failed. It just wasn't appealing enough for a grant.

- She says one of the problems is the boards on the outside are compromised, plus the addition would have to be taken off, as it wasn't part of the original.
- Commissioner Deutsch asks if there are funds to do a rehab instead of a restoration, and what are the legal and historical ramifications? Jennifer says that it is a problem. Also, the 2017 price of \$200K is probably more like \$500K to do a rehab. A full restoration would be over \$1 million.
- Pat asks what railroad company. Jennifer answers it's the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railroad, which the Cape Haze Pioneer Trail follows along.
- Theresa thinks that the way Jennifer explained the Bunkhouse's historical significance is very appealing.

The remaining HAC meetings will be held at Centennial Park through 2024

- Jennifer says they will be in either this room or across the hall.
- Commissioner Deutsch asks about availability of Port Charlotte Library. Jennifer answers it is not available. He mentions Mid-County Library is at least a year and a half away from being repaired. He says the remaining structure is strong. He also mentions the popularity of our libraries and the high ratings we receive.
- Valerie asks about the Genealogy group. Jennifer says they split meetings between the Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda libraries and that their books are in storage in Orlando with everything else from MCRL. We cannot get anything back until the building is finished.

Member Input

- Valerie says the dedication of the Never Forget Memorial is November 4th at 9am at Hickory Bluff Cemetery.
- Commissioner Deutsch says there will be an event at Gaines Park on October 21 at 3pm to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Beirut bombing. Bill Gaines would have been 61 today. There will be a flyover and a motorcycle procession. At 4:30, they will go to the Twisted Fork for a fundraiser concert.
- He also announces there is another week for submissions to the Veterans Day parade. It was approved to be held here and in Punta Gorda every other year. It starts at 9am on Saturday, November 11th at Gaines Park.

Meeting adjourns

- **Next meeting is on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 9am at Centennial Park**