



City of Franklin

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Franklin, TN 37064
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Meeting Minutes Civil War Historical Commission

Thursday, May 11, 2023

8:00 AM

Board Room

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commissioner Lewis called the meeting to order at 08:04 AM

Board Members Present: Patrick Baggett, Heather Doleshel, Colbi Layne Hogan, Marlene Holmes, Kelly Kautzman, Pam Lewis, Tony Morreale, Mary Pearce, Fred Reed, Sam Huffman, Rachael Finch, Steve Bacon

Board Members Absent: Eric Jacobson, Rich Buckner, Alma McLemore, Alan Simms, Clay Perry

Staff Present: Kelly Dannenfelser, Emily Huffer, Brian Walker, Vernon Gerth

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Consideration Of Approval Of Minutes

Sponsors:

Commissioner Baggett moved to approve the March 9, 2023, meeting minutes. Commissioner Bacon seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously 9-0.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Consideration of Williamson Remembers Historical Markers.

Sponsors: Kelly Dannenfelser, Emily Huffer

Mr. Vernon Gerth introduced himself and stated he was part of the committee for "Williamson Remembers". Mr. Gerth stated he was there to present some information and to seek this commissions guidance and recommendation. Mr. Gerth stated there are three markers to talk about and share some of the history for after the Civil War. Mr. Gerth stated he had Mr. Kenneth Hill and Lamont Turner with him to speak on behalf of this presentation. Mr. Gerth stated there was information in their packets with the language they wish to use that has been well thought out. Mr. Gerth stated the packet also includes the locations. Mr. Gerth stated they appeared before the Board of Mayor Alderman a couple of months ago to introduce them to the proposal and some discussion occurred that placing the markers in closer proximity to where the lynchings occurred. Mr. Gerth stated that is what we would be seeking your guidance on and stated one location would be located outside City Hall right on the corner of Third Avenue, and the other would be located on the Northwest corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and North Margin Street and the third would be placed on the Southwest corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and North Margin Street. Mr. Gerth stated the reason the locations were selected was number one they are by the historic cemeteries but also on a multi-use path in close proximity to Bicentennial Park so people can look thoughtfully look at the markers. Mr. Gerth stated he was going to turn it over to Dr. Kenneth Hill and Mr. Lamont Turner to share the thoughts that have gone into crafting the markers and some of the history of how Williamson Remembers came about.

Dr. Hill stated he was the pastor of the Shorter Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Dr. Hill stated the church has 155 years of existence and is located as part of the footprint that used to house Union soldiers during the war. Dr. Hill stated as African Americans we claim the Civil War as part of our story too. Dr. Hill explained the presentation given to the Board a couple of months ago attests to our claim as to why this should happen, and it is the right thing to do. Dr. Hill stated it humanizes and memorializes experiences of newly freed African Americans after the Civil War and we see this as a

celebration as part of the historical City of Franklin that will add to the richness of the tourism industry and where the markers are located will help to inform how we have played a very crucial and critical role as part of democratizing America.

Mr. Lamont Turner stated he has been a resident of Franklin for thirty-five years and explained why he wanted to get into the narrative process of the history and understanding of it. Mr. Turner stated he became a part of this group to create a more balanced narrative and a better understanding of what it all meant meaning the actual continuation of the cause in which the confederacy fought for in which the end result led to lynching, which is what we are talking about. Mr. Turner stated their humanity was minimized often to where bodies were lynched. Mr. Turner stated he thinks it is important to us as a community to tell a balanced narrative. Mr. Turner stated that is why my interest is here along with other collective stakeholders and history leaders and part of doing that is we want to humanize to erect the voices of those who were lynched at that time because those voices were silenced. Mr. Turner stated it is an opportunity to celebrate the humanity of all of us in the community. Mr. Turner stated they missed an opportunity before historically and he thinks this is an opportunity to be leaders on this forefront now to elevate the voices of those who were suppressed. Mr. Turner stated they are trying to do it in a responsible and accurate way. Mr. Turner stated that is what the balanced team has brought to the table, and we have looked at it at every angle of it all and today's step is another step in doing that. Mr. Turner stated that is the heart of where he is coming from and thinks overall collectively that is where he feels the committee is coming from as well because we have a responsibility and an opportunity.

Mr. Gerth explained a little bit about the process and stated they did appear before the Board of Mayor and Alderman to seek their approval to place the markers within the public right of way. Mr. Gerth stated the markers will look like the typical markers that have been placed throughout our community and the Streets Department will erect those and the group will fundraise so that cost will be borne by us and the citizens. Mr. Gerth stated Franklin has done a wonderful job telling the fuller story and honoring humanity. Mr. Gerth stated they seek a recommendation and your guidance on location and look forward to any questions.

Commissioner Lewis stated she had a question and requested to know where we would stand if we put these markers up memorializing lynching, as in would this be setting the bar higher.

Mr. Gerth stated he didn't know if he included it in this presentation but there are about a half dozen communities in and around Tennessee who have erected similar memorials regarding the lynching.

Commissioner Doleshel requested to know if the locations on the map were the actual locations of where the lynchings occurred.

Mr. Gerth stated in the language (on the proposed sign) talks about where they occurred, but the markers aren't in the actual location.

Discussion ensued on the fact that lynching is not just being hung but there are different forms of lynching and explained lynchings were done by mobs.

Mr. Gerth spoke on his educational journey as a part of Williamson Remembers and stated he has had two different times to visit the "Equal Justice Museum" in Montgomery as it is a sobering experience and it caused him to seek more information.

Mr. Turner stated they have agonized and confronted their selves on the understanding for over the past two years and we have had courageous conversations to feel comfortable and make others feel comfortable.

Discussion ensued on the topic and the lack of knowledge of the Fuller Story and the need to tell the whole story.

Dr. Hill stated there are several strands to the larger picture and all lead to reconciliation.

Commissioner Lewis requested to know if this could be the first step to what Dr. West is talking about and if this could be a springboard.

Commissioner Pearce stated this can be the springboard to going forward, but we will need a comprehensive plan sometime soon.

Ms. Dannenfelser stated she would add that the Preservation Plan has not been updated in many years, but currently Envision Franklin is currently being updated and the Preservation Plan is the next update that will be recommended following Envision Franklin adoption.

Mr. Gerth stated it is both comforting and exciting that we are all engaged. Mr. Gerth stated in an ideal situation if we had a museum, we would have a curator that would tell the story. Mr. Gerth stated we have that opportunity, and the Civil War Historical Commission is in many respects like the curator of the museum.

After some discussion, Commissioner Finch moved to recommend to BOMA that CWHC works with Williamson Remembers to move forward working towards location and interpretation for the three markers. Commissioner Reed seconded the motion.

Commissioner Baggett stated he had one point of discussion that the BOMA presented a list of items that he thinks they wanted this Commission to address, and we have all said we want to tell this story but he thinks with this recommendation the Board wanted us to review more.

Mr. Gerth stated he thinks after hearing the recommendation we have a bit more work to do to refine.

Commissioner Baggett stated the BOMA is seeking guidance from us and I think there will still be questions.

Mr. Gerth stated we are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Turner stated it would be good to have the questions so they could respond.

Mr. Gerth stated they have heeded the comments that our BOMA made and will do the same with this commission and the language of the markers may not sit right with everybody but ultimately the BOMA is going to provide the approval to place the markers. Mr. Gerth stated we may need to come back as a group with the language on the markers as presented is accurate, concise, and true.

Commissioner Lewis stated to Commissioner Pearce's point she thinks it would behoove us, as a commission, and maybe invite each of you and talk about how we have spoken in a positive manner and have been working to celebrate Black history.

Commissioner Pearce stated she felt the meeting looked at only the negative and to her that is not fair.

Commissioner Lewis noted it is important the markers are put in places where people can pull off and read them.

Commissioner Pearce moved to make an amendment to the motion that going forward with these three signs and the city pursue an overall interpretation plan with signage going forward. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

With the main motion having been made and amended the motion carried unanimously 12-0.

Ms. Dannenfelser stated Ms. Huffer had put together a spreadsheet asking for updated contact information and it would be passed around.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

3. COF Historic Parks Audio Tour

Sponsors: Kelly Dannenfelser, Emily Huffer

Commissioner Doleshel stated they have been looking at what is already out there versus what we can add to the tour. Commissioner Hogan stated they have looked at how they can make things shorter and received a lot of information

from the cell phone company on how long it should be, etc. and they are now moving forward identifying what we want said and what will be said.

Commissioner Hogan stated she and Commissioner Reed are working on the audio tour on the square and met with Dr. Chris Williamson and Mr. Lamont Turner late last month and we are going to talk with Commissioner Holmes soon to see create a perspective that will be kind of more of a pilot written test for the committee to sift through and edit and create an outline as a template for the rest of the tour.

Commissioner Lewis requested to know what amount of time is ideal for the audio tour.

Commissioner Doleshel stated two minutes and to try not to exceed five minutes and she added they recognize the Leadership Franklin group that did this and provided content for it because we just look at it as we are just enhancing it and are not going to do away with anything that is out there because intend to keep the original voices and recordings.

Commissioner Reed stated they will have the option to listen to the extended version if they so choose.

4. U.S. Line Markers

Sponsors: Kelly Dannenfelser, Emily Huffer

Commissioner Baggett stated it was in the budget.

Ms. Dannenfelser stated it was in the proposed budget which will be voted on June 13. Ms. Dannenfelser stated it was scheduled for two years of implementation.

Commissioner Pearce requested to know how much was put into the budget.

Commissioner Baggett stated \$100,000 spread out over a couple of years.

Commissioner Huffman stated that Save the Franklin Battlefield paid for one of the markers in March and he thinks the Battle of Franklin Trust paid for one as well.

Ms. Dannenfelser stated the first two markers were donated and have been ordered and the Street Department has installed the foundation for them and when the markers come in, they will be installed.

Commissioner Huffman stated he asked the monument company when they would be available, and they stated maybe sometime in July.

Commissioner Baggett stated an event should be set up. Commissioners Pearce and Lewis agreed.

5. Historic Wayfinding Signs

Sponsors: Kelly Dannenfelser, Emily Huffer

Ms. Dannenfelser stated more than half have been installed to date and the Street Department needs to break for the summer workload but will pick up again in the fall. Ms. Dannenfelser stated all the signs have been made and just need to be installed.

COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Lewis stated the Tennessee State Museum has a new photographic exhibit on the Rosenwald Schools.

Commissioner Pearce stated that 264 Natchez Street (The Merrill-Williams House) got its variance at the Board of Zoning Appeals on the parking and there will be 11 spaces and will work with Carter House for any overflow parking and we are ready to move forward.

Commissioner Lewis requested to know when the next Civil War Roundtable is.

Commissioner Finch stated this coming Sunday on a Zoom meeting at 3 pm and the topic is Blood and Treasure.

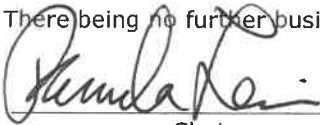
Commissioner Pearce stated she has been reading some firsthand accounts of women taking care of soldiers after the Civil War and our women took care of both Confederate and Union soldiers.

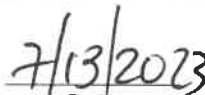
Commissioner Holmes invited everyone to join the Franklin Chapter 14 members and McGavock Confederate Corporation for the annual memorial service on June 4th at 2 pm.

Commissioner Kautzman stated she did have several women's history tours available this month.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 09:10 AM p.m.


Chair


Date

