

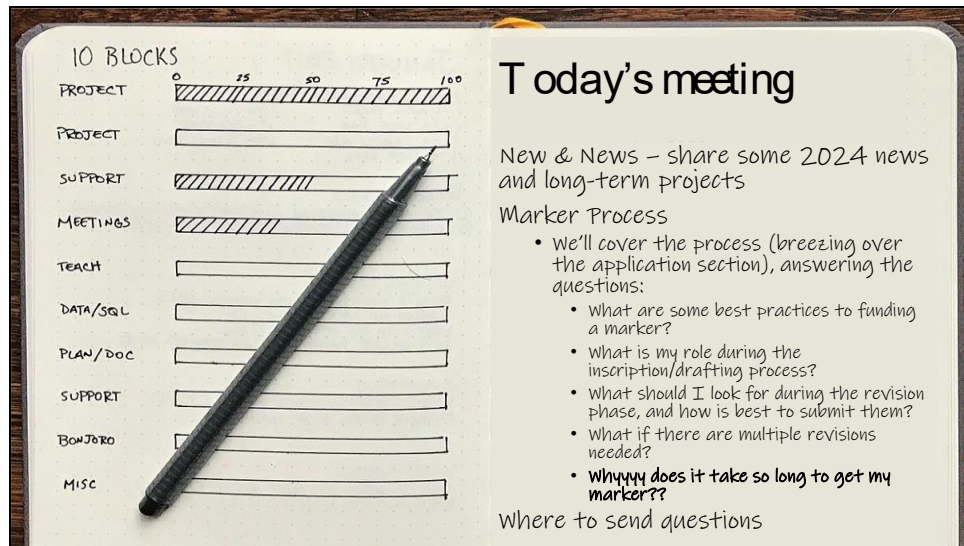
Slide 1



Good Afternoon! We will begin the webinar shortly. In the meantime, we have attached a document that has the presentation and relevant links we'll be talking about today; please feel free to open these links and follow along.

This webinar will be recorded and the recording, along with the slides and script, will be available in the next couple days so you can watch it later. We will send out the link via email and on our website. So if anyone on your Commission would benefit, please have them watch the recording when it is available.

Slide 2



Good Afternoon, Everyone. Thank you for attending today's webinar. This webinar will be recorded and the recording, along with the slides and script, will be available in the next couple days so you can watch it later. We will send out the link via email and on our website. So if anyone on your Commission would benefit, please have them watch the recording when it is available.

Today, we're going to cover 2024 news (and there's a lot! We've been busy!) and cover the whole marker process. As we have already made an entire webinar just focusing on the application process, we will not be covering that part of the process in depth here, but instead looking at the later part of the process that doesn't get talked about as much, including funding, drafting, revisions, casting, and shipping. And of course, we'll cover everyone's favorite question, where is my marker and why is it taking so long??!!!

We will handle any questions at the end of the webinar. If you have any questions during the presentation, please put them in the box and we will review them during Q&A time. Please be sure to include enough context so that if it's something we cover five minutes in, we will know what you're referring to when we look at the question after 45 minutes.



If you or your CHC members still have questions around the application process, we've included the link to the application process webinar here for your convenience:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/7400458054436445788>

Once we get into discussing the marker process, we will be following the process chart:

[https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/Marker%20Process%20Timeline\\_8.2021.pdf](https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/Marker%20Process%20Timeline_8.2021.pdf)

This process chart is a staple of our website, so you may have seen it in the past.

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As a fun addition, before we talk about anything 2024 related, I thought you might like to know what the Marker Team accomplished in 2023. None of this would be possible without YOU, and I'm still in awe every day that you are volunteers and put so much heart and soul into this role, so before we do anything, thank you. With your help, we were able to:

Receive and evaluate 312 applications of all kinds. Write 214 Marker Drafts, ship 224 markers, approve 304 proofs, order 131 markers from the foundry, and process 23 replacements. In all, around 500 markers are currently somewhere in the process.

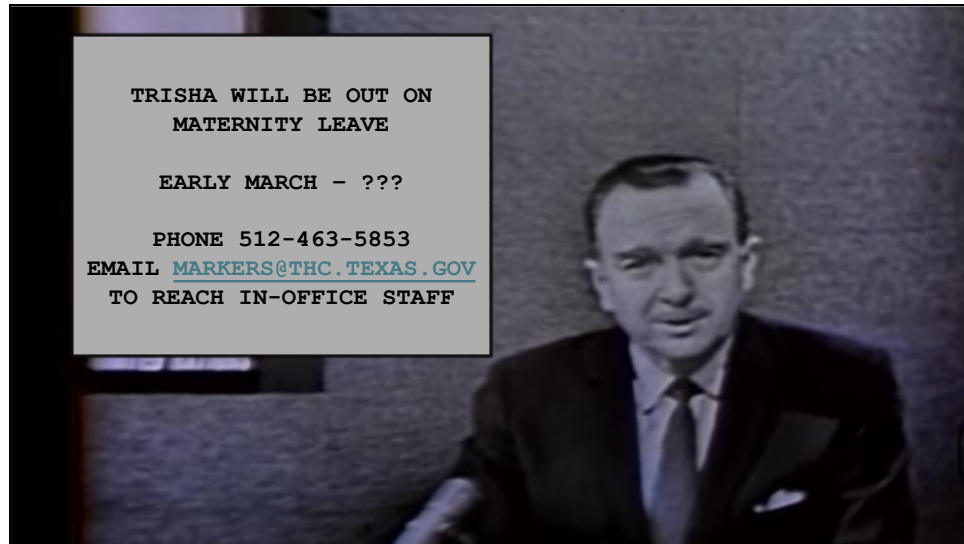
And because I love data, I ran some other numbers. Did you know that we facilitate approximately 200 new markers a year? Since each marker takes 10 "actions" – or things the staff must do to see that marker produced - that means to keep the program running, we must complete 2,000 actions a year. Divide that between the 260 working days in a year, and we have to complete 7.7 marker action items a day to ensure the program continues to run. That's only new markers – not including existing markers, Atlas corrections, answering emails, committee meetings or anything else.

Slide 5



And now, let's move onto the news. I thought you might appreciate if Houston-native Walter Cronkite helped us out with delivering the marker news this year. We do have quite a bit of news stories for you today, just a reminder that the powerpoint with our notes will be available along with the recording later.

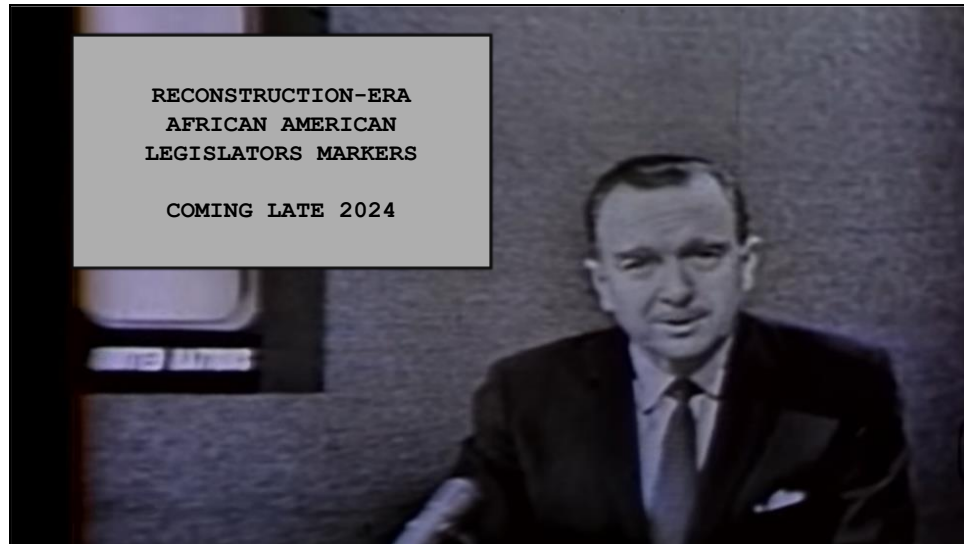
Slide 6



The first piece of news is that Trisha will be out on maternity leave from early March to an undetermined time. During that time, Bob and Alicia will be covering the 2024 marker application period by ourselves. As you know Trisha plays a crucial role in receiving the marker applications, so please be patient with our staff this year; we may input things a little slower than usual.

Trisha will not be checking email while she's out of the office, but emailing [markers@thc.texas.gov](mailto:markers@thc.texas.gov) will always get you to whoever is in the office. Likewise if you have occasion to call Trisha directly, you may want to note our division's main office number, 512-463-5853 will now be the best way to get in touch with Bob and Alicia, along with their direct lines.

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In other news....

Last year, the 88<sup>th</sup> legislature passed a bill instructing the THC to produce 23 markers, each honoring a Reconstruction-Era African American Texas legislator. These markers are a bit different, as they are not our usual style and the wording and placement is dictated by the bill, so we haven't involved the CHCs just yet. The markers in most cases are to be placed at the county courthouses in the districts the legislators served, and if there's more than 1 marker in a district, another appropriate location. We've written the markers and made a list of appropriate counties and locations. We're working with the THC's courthouse reviewers to secure permissions and, if necessary, permits. We'll loop the CHCs in the next few weeks about placements, and, as the time gets closer, we'll help you make necessary local arrangements – I'm sure these will create a lot of local excitement and you will want press releases and dedication materials, so be looking out for an email from us. The bill dictates these be in the ground by January 2025.



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The new THC website went live a month ago!

[THE SCREENSHOT OF THE WEBSITE IS A VIDEO – HOVER OVER THE VIDEO AND CLICK PLAY]

If you have had an opportunity to explore it, you will agree it is much more navigable. All the marker info you know and love is still there. Please email us if you can't find something or a link you click on is broken...our IT team is working to fix those types of errors now. You may want to check any links to the THC site you have on your own CHC website or any personal notes – those probably do not work now.



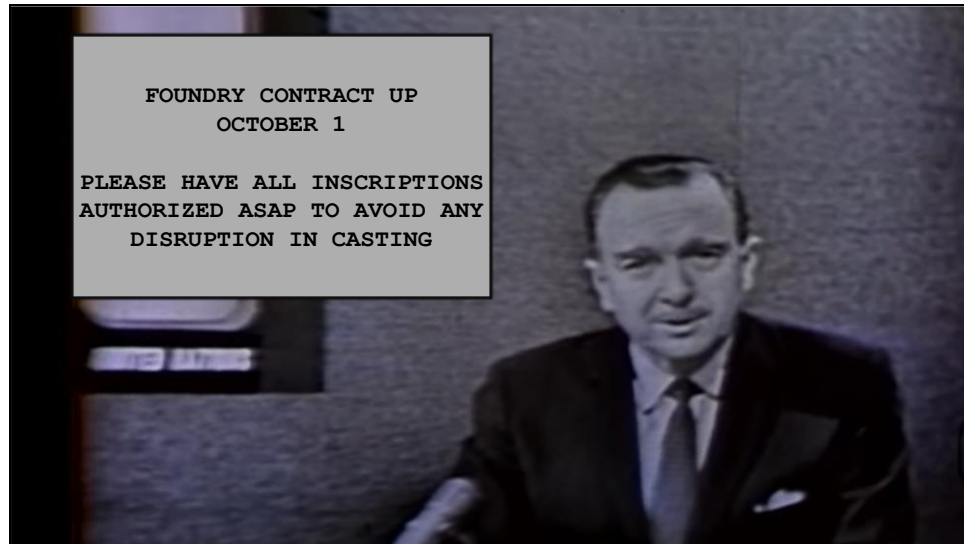
Slide 9



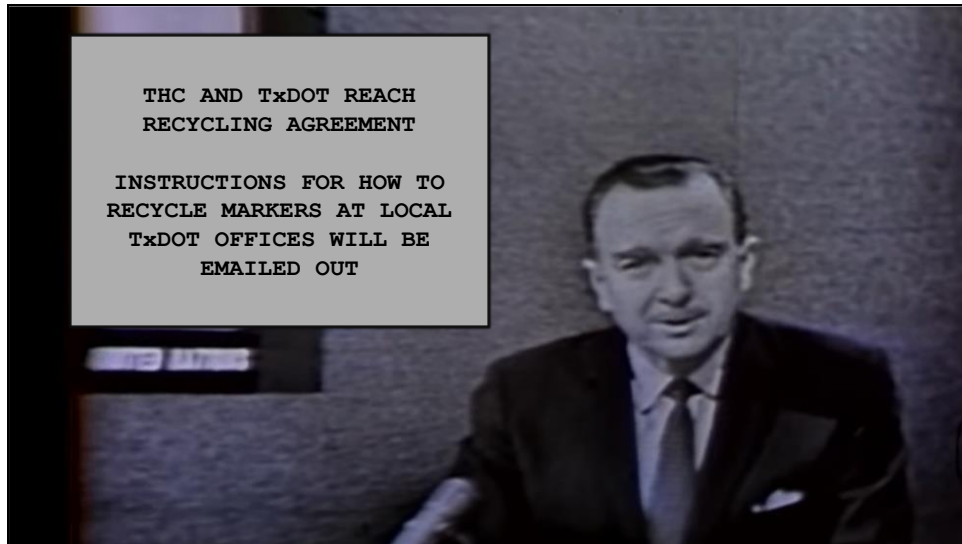
Alicia has been working to secure a federal grant that will allow the THC to digitize all 12,000 paper marker files we have in the office. The plan is to make the digitized marker files available to the public on the Portal to Texas History.

This is a multi-year project, but one day in the not-so-distant future, you'll be able to access these incredible repositories of local history at the click of a button!

DID YOU KNOW – Around 1,500 RTHL files (1962-2012) are already available for view on the Portal to Texas History: <https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/partners/THC/>



Our contract with our current foundry is set to expire October 1 of this year. As anyone who has worked in government knows, this means we're beginning a lengthy process to secure a new contract, and we are doing everything we can to make sure this work won't cause a single day of interruption in the casting process. But we aren't fortune tellers, and a disruption is always possible. So, we're recommending that you have any drafts authorized by March 10, in order to get it on April's Quarterly Meeting agenda. After the April Quarterly Meeting, we will place our final order under our current contract. We know some of the drafts in your county are currently in our court; we'll do our darnedest to get those all to you asap so you can get to doing your part.



Breaking news: THC and TxDOT have finally dotted all the l's and crossed all the t's and signed on all of the dotted lines of our agreement to recycle THC aluminum markers. This agreement means you will be able to take damaged, obsolete, or otherwise appropriate markers for recycling to a district TxDOT office, where they will be recycled into...a geodesic dome, hopefully. Or a good can of Coke. Don't go ripping any markers out of the ground just yet, though, because you'll want to read the detailed instructions for how to recycle such markers before you start. We'll be emailing instructions out soon.



And perhaps our biggest news happening in 2024 – whew, it will be a busy year – we will debut a new online application and status portal!

**A quick note before we tell you about this: the 2024 marker period from March 1-May 15, 2024 is UNCHANGED and will operate like normal.**

This portal will eventually replace emails as the main method through which you submit information to the THC and discover the status of your existing markers.

You will be able to fill out an online application, attach PDFs, and see the status of all the active markers in your county. Once a marker is accepted, you'll be able to access marker inscription drafts, request revisions, and authorize inscriptions through the portal. (And yes, you can choose to still get emails when a status changes.) It will also have PDFs CHCs will find useful, like those recycling instructions I mentioned earlier.

Unfortunately, it won't be able to do two things we had hoped – take payments OR tell you where you are in line under your status.

Persons with access will be divided into three “roles” – Sponsor, CHC official, and THC Staff. We're still deciding what access these roles should have.

We are planning to roll out online application functions FIRST, and a small subset of counties will help us work out any bugs. Keep watching your email as we update you on our progress. We will have a separate webinar on how to navigate the new portal.

Our goal is to have all applications submitted via the portal starting in the 2025 marker period.





And as Walter always said to close out a broadcast, “And that’s the way it is.”

I imagine you might have some questions related to this news. As a reminder; we will handle any questions at the end of the webinar. If you have any questions during the presentation, please put them in the box and we will review them during Q&A time.

We’ve already had a lot to chew on, but now we’ll start on breaking down the marker process.





### Application Periods

Regular App Period: March 1-May 15

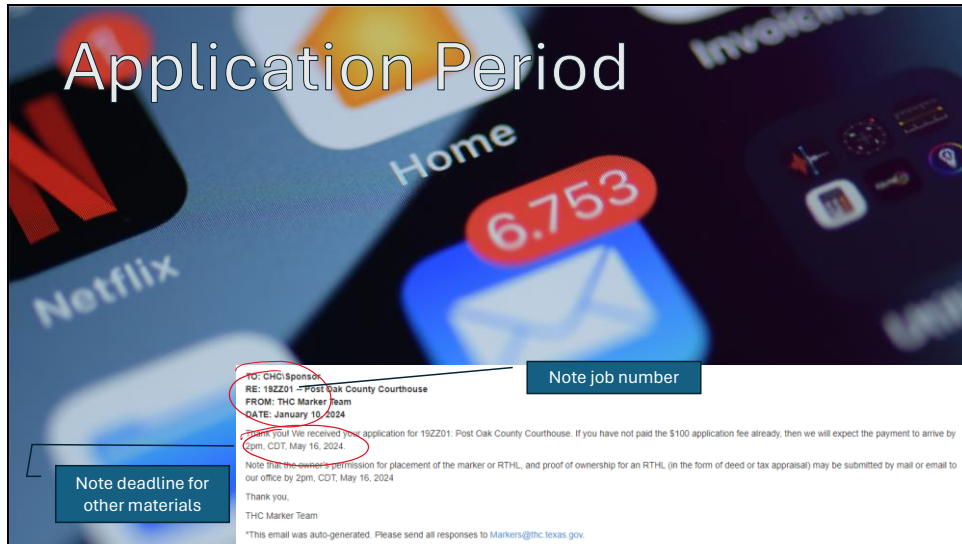
Undertold App Period: October 1 – November 15

**REPLACEMENT MARKER APPLICATIONS  
CEMETERY NAME AND DATE PLAQUES**  
Accepted all year round  
App fee and plaque invoiced together

The marker process begins with the application, and as you are aware, applications operate on a schedule. The Application period for regular markers is March 1-May 15, highlighted here in yellow. The Application period for Undertolds is October 1- November 15, highlighted here in green. While we are mentioning undertolds, we have available on our website an entire webinar just focusing on Undertolds, if that's something you'd like to explore in greater depth.

[CLICK LIKE YOU WANT TO GO TO THE NEXT SLIDE; THIS WILL TRIGGER NAME AND DATE POP-UP].

I did want to make a note that we do take certain kinds of applications and forms all year round, including Cemetery name and date plaques and Replacement marker forms.



The first part we're going to cover in depth today is when the THC receives your application. First, THC staff will review your application and may contact you for missing documents, specific questions or to discuss application if it needs changing. Failure to respond to any specific questions or submit requested documentation by deadlines may result in denial of your application.

Applications are officially accepted/rejected by the Commissioners at their July Quarterly Meeting; they may also accept with changes.

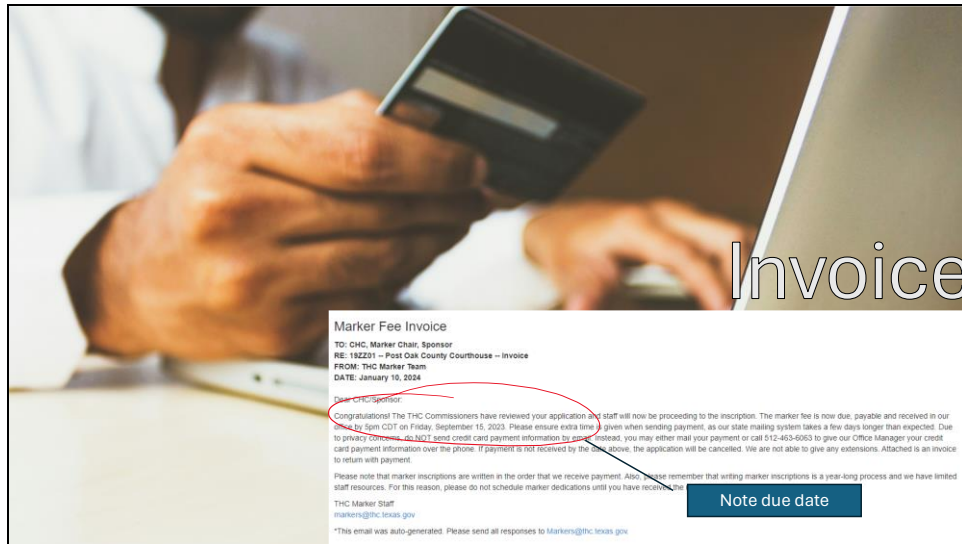
Once that is done, the THC Staff will create and email invoices for all of the accepted markers.

Our biggest tips for this process:

An automatic confirmation email will be sent for each application logged in the portal – check your spam for these!

If you have to send a separate email asking us to confirm we received your applications, send ONE confirmation email listing all of the applications you've submitted for your county.

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Like we mentioned, an Invoice is created after the Commission approves your application in late July. You'll be emailed the invoice in early August. Please double-check the email and invoice that the job number, marker size, and title are accurate. If something is incorrect, please contact us. The invoice also references your preferred mounting option (whether you ordered a pole or not) – please check that as well.

Note that we do not allow multiple payments for one marker. Some CHCs have the sponsor(s) pay them, then the CHC pays us; that works out really well. But it is ultimately up to the CHC and sponsor how to pay. We recommend you ensure before the application is even submitted that full funding is in place for the marker.

As you're aware, THC payments take a bit of time to complete. At this time, we aren't able to speed up that process. We'll notify you if something is amiss with the payment or we haven't received one and the deadline is getting close.

Warning: This next slide features \*amazing\* photoshop skills. Truly, prepare yourselves.



## Drafting + Revisions

Wow. I know. It's incredible.

After payment is received, the marker staff can begin working on inscriptions. This is obviously the most labor-intensive part of the process for THC staff as inscriptions are not quick to write. If there's any specific question(s) we need answered during the draft phase, we'll email you; please respond back to those ASAP to avoid delays, even if you don't have any other information or can't access that source any longer.

Once we send you a draft, you'll want to send it to your sponsor and CHC marker committees if you have them. Please take us off the email chains as you go through this process. We save every email we send or receive regarding markers, and that's a lot of time saving emails and it can make the revision process confusing for staff.

When we send you a draft, please look over it for any factual, interpretive, or typographical errors. Errors in markers keep us up at night. Specifically, look for spellings and dates. Take this opportunity to look at primary sources again. If you've gleaned any info from one primary source, such as a headstone, census, newspaper, or deed, please check with another primary source if available. I know I'm preaching to the choir when I say folks in past generations truly could play it fast and loose with spellings and headstone dates. [Example from Luther Hall architect AH Edberg really being spelled Edburg.]

Some helpful additional checks are that the header contains correct information, and if there are any misspelled words or weird sentence structures – sometimes these occur from doing multiple revision drafts.

If you're requesting additions, please ensure the marker is still around the same number of words as the draft we sent. We get lots of requests for additions that make the markers too long for casting. Especially on the small size, the number and order of words can also really make a difference in how long the marker ends up being. If you're going to make additions, please also include what we can delete to make the marker the same length as the original.



The CHCs should gather all the revision requests from sponsors, work out any contradictions, and send us ONE list using the form provided in the email. The form really is the easiest way for us to understand what changes you want to your marker. Please don't rewrite the maker; even if it was allowed and you wrote the best marker ever, the way our template works, I couldn't copy/paste it.

Notice I call these revision \*requests.\* We look at each request and judge it according to our policies, space, and many other factors. If we didn't incorporate a revision request, it's for a reason and that decision is final. Submitting it a second or third time won't get it included on your marker.

Please limit revision requests to only glaring typographical, interpretive, or grammatical errors – requesting revisions simply for style reasons really bog down the revision process. The THC writes markers based on our policies and an existing style guide so that all 17,000 markers have a cohesive voice.

Revisions should only come from the CHC marker chair or CHC chair. We save but do not consider any sponsor revisions we are sent. We only look at revisions once we get them from a CHC official. If you're a CHC official, you can help us explain to sponsors why some of the sponsor's revision requests are against marker guidelines or are otherwise inappropriate for historical markers before it gets to us.

To avoid delays in casting, submit revision requests by the date in the email. Where does the date come from? The automated system counts 45 days from when the email is being sent and inserts the date revision requests are due.

Once the THC and CHC have an inscription that is satisfactory, the CHC must officially authorize the inscription. That can be as simple as an email from the CHC official stating that you authorize the inscription or an X on the form we send out.





From this point, THC staff goes a bit radio silent as we complete the next few steps. But since this is the marker process webinar, we'll take this time to go behind the curtain and show you what's happening with your marker.



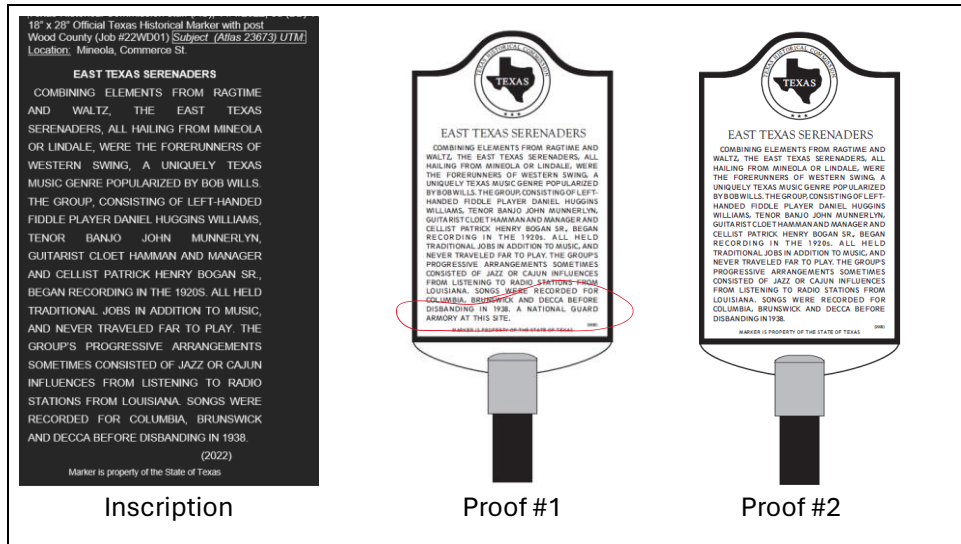
Once an inscription is authorized, all marker inscriptions must be approved by our THC Commissioners during the next Quarterly Meeting.

If you're wondering when that is, you can find the schedule on the THC website.

The marker staff compiles all the inscriptions that have been authorized since the last meeting for Commissioner Review and adds them to the next meeting's agenda. Note that the window to add agenda items closes several weeks before the meeting, so sending authorization on June 29<sup>th</sup>, for example, unfortunately won't get your marker on the agenda for a June 30<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Meeting. The marker staff then addresses any commissioner revisions. These are usually very minor, if they occur.

The Commissioners approve the marker text at the Quarterly Meeting, and once we have heard back from all the commissioners that they have no edits, we order the markers with the foundry.

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A step you may not have been aware of is that the foundry sends us a proof of your marker before it's cast. The marker staff diligently checks the proof to make sure the text is 100% correct, as well as re-checking anew for spelling and name/date accuracy (and yes, we've caught several mistakes!), and checking for formatting issues that make for awkward marker reading, such as several "the"s in a row or lines that only have a single word. We also check that the marker has the correct medallion, RTHL tagline or not, year, and mounting option. If a single thing is wrong, we can't approve the proof and the foundry re-does the proof. Once everything is perfect, we approve the proof and the foundry can begin casting the marker.

From the proof being approved to the marker casting and finishing process being completed is currently taking about five months.



Eventually, the marker is cast! As it is being painted and drying, the foundry notifies us the marker is ready to ship.

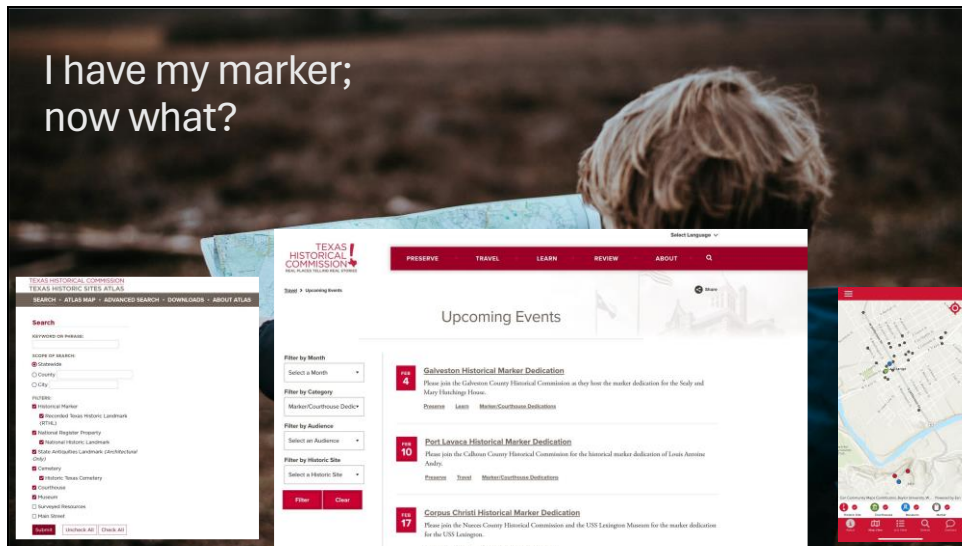
We will send an automated email letting you know your marker is ready, and ask you to confirm the shipping information provided in your application is still correct.

This will be the first communication about your marker in several months. We ask you to reply back to that email – confirming that yes, that’s still a good address, or giving us an updated address. We understand that people and circumstances change in the many months it takes to get a marker, and we will not ship your marker until you confirm the address is still good.

I’m sure many of you who were on the CHC last year still remember the saga, but the foundry’s shipping courier, one of the largest in the country, suddenly went out of business last year. The new shipping company, overloaded with volume, started charging higher rates to deliver to residential locations. These higher rates are still applying, so we recommend providing business addresses for your markers.

The markers and poles now ship in separate boxes and several people have received them on different days, so please don’t be concerned if that happens. If it’s been more than 3 days since the first package has arrived and not the other, please contact us.





Once you have your marker, open it up to check it. It's not common, but it has happened that the marker gets damaged during shipping, folks have gotten the wrong marker or, just as they see the text in metal, they notice a misspelling. Look it over and make sure it's right.

We recommend not scheduling a dedication until you've confirmed your marker is correct. Once everything looks good to go, set a date! We want to celebrate with you, so let us know about your dedication by emailing [markers@thc.texas.gov](mailto:markers@thc.texas.gov). We'll put it on our THC Calendar. [CLICK NEXT; CALENDAR SNAPSHOT WILL POP UP]

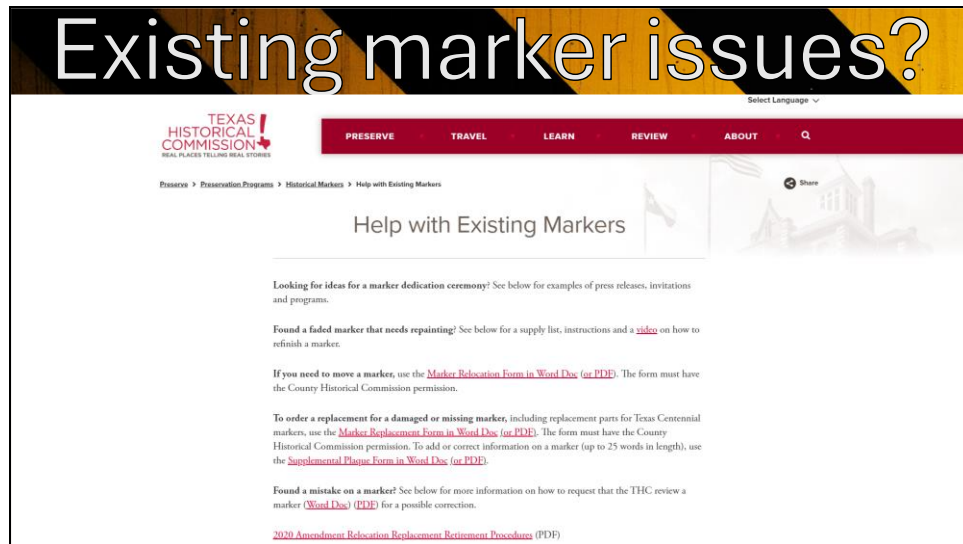
Marker Dedication information, including the instillation instructions, can be found on our website: <https://thc.texas.gov/preserve/preservation-programs/historical-markers/help-existing-markers>

We also want to help people find your marker! We'll put a mapdot on our THC Atlas (<https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/>). [CLICK NEXT; ATLAS SNAPSHOT WILL POP UP]  
Folks can also discover it using our app, Texas History Navigator! [CLICK NEXT; APP SNAPSHOT WILL POP UP]

Be sure to let us know when it's public, so when the public looks for your marker, they find accurate information.







As we all know, just getting the marker and dedicating it is half the battle. There's a myriad of things that can go wrong with an existing marker.

For specific help with existing marker, visit our "Help with Existing Markers" page on the website: <https://thc.texas.gov/preserve/preservation-programs/historical-markers/help-existing-markers>

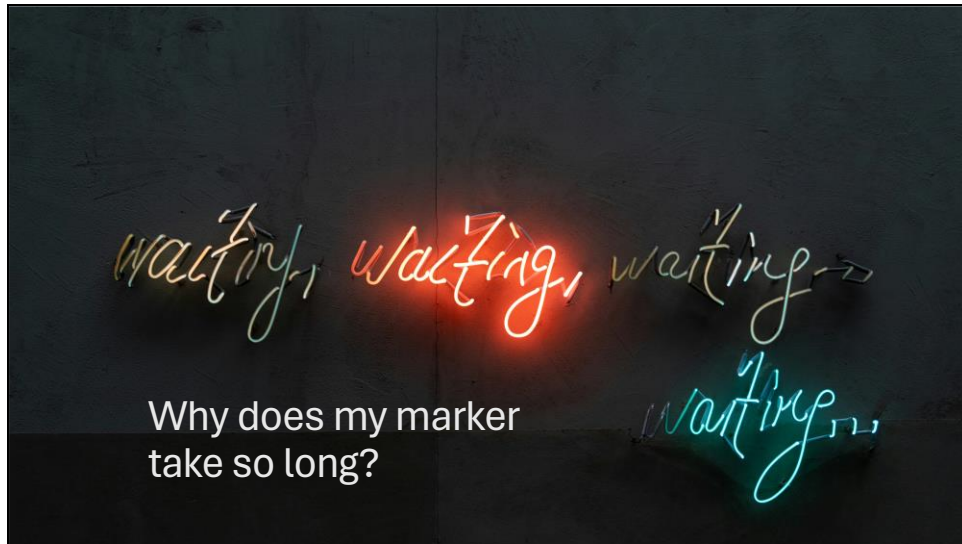
If the marker goes missing or gets damaged, fill out a Replacement Form. We might also at that time recommend a Supplemental Plate to update the info on the marker.

If you need to move a marker, there's a Relocation Form. During this process, you can help us keep the most up-to-date info on the Atlas regarding this marker.

If you come across a marker that is just plain inaccurate, fill out a Marker Review Request. These requests are governed by relevant Texas Administrative Code, here: [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p\\_dir=&p\\_rloc=&p\\_tloc=&p\\_ploc=&pg=1&p\\_tac=&ti=13&pt=2&ch=21&rl=12](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=13&pt=2&ch=21&rl=12)

There's also a procedure if you'd like to retire a marker; it's all there on the "Help with Existing Markers" page of our website.





And, we promised we would cover it, here's some reasons why your marker might be taking so very long to produce. Several of these are out of the hands of you or us, and we appreciate your patience and understanding that each marker is different and some might take longer than others.

The first reason is that the marker's topic requires additional reviewers. Something I didn't mention earlier is that each member of our team reads every draft after it's written and makes edits. If a marker covers a particular subject, we send them out to additional reviewers for their input. For example, one of our THC staff is a music historian, so she reads all of our music markers. Our military historian reads all of our military markers. Our tribal liaison reads any markers mentioning Native Americans. Our Archeology Division Project Reviewer reads any markers related to archeology. We also might request the expertise of non-THC staff during the review process to ensure these markers are of the highest quality. None of the folks I mentioned get paid to review markers, so the review process is subject to their time and availability.

The second reason your marker might take so long is that Quarterly Meetings only happen four times a year, so it may be several months until the inscription you've authorized is approved by the Commission.

The third reason is that because we check EVERYTHING on a proof, the approval process is time consuming. But trust us, you'd rather that marker be correct and late, than on time and wrong.





Email any questions to [markers@thc.texas.gov](mailto:markers@thc.texas.gov).

If you have questions about specific markers in your counties, please save all those questions and send all of them in one email to [markers@thc.texas.gov](mailto:markers@thc.texas.gov). This applies if you're wondering what status your marker is, or have specific extenuating circumstances that wouldn't apply to the rest of the counties.

Now it's time to answer the first question!

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Thanks for joining us today! Again, we will be sending out the recording of this webinar in the next couple of days. In the meantime, if you have any additional questions, please email them to [markers@thc.texas.gov](mailto:markers@thc.texas.gov). Have a great day!