

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

AGENDA ARCHEOLOGY COMMITTEE Videoconference Meeting February 2, 2021 9:30 A.M.

(or upon the adjournment of the 8:45 a.m. Antiquities Advisory Board meeting, whichever occurs later)

Pursuant to the Governor's March 16, 2020 suspension of certain provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the February 2, 2021 meeting of the Archeology Committee will be held by videoconference as authorized under Texas Government Code section 551.127. Zoom meeting access link (registration required): <http://bit.ly/feb2021committees> or audio only access via telephone at 1-346-248-7799; Webinar ID 918 0036 1390. Agenda and meeting materials will be available at www.thc.texas.gov/videoconferences after January 27, 2021. The members may discuss and/or take action on any of the items listed in the agenda.

1. **Call to Order** – *Chair Bruseth*
 - A. Committee Introductions
 - B. Establish a Quorum
 - C. Recognize and/or excuse absences
2. **Minutes** – *Bruseth*

Consider approval of the October 27, 2020 Archeology Committee meeting minutes
3. **Consider the re-certification of the THC's Curatorial Facility for Artifact Research, Travis County under the Curatorial Facilities Certification Program for a ten-year period (item 8.2)** – *Jones*
4. **Update on *La Belle* and 1554 shipwreck collections at Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, Texas State History Museum, and the La Salle Odyssey Museums** – *Jones*
5. **Division Director's Report** – *Jones*

Update on Archeology Division programs and staff

 - A. Regional archeology/marine activities
 - B. Texas Archeology Month Update
 - C. CFCP Program Update
 - D. Upcoming activities/events
6. **Adjournment** – *Bruseth*

NOTICE OF ASSISTANCE AT PUBLIC MEETINGS: Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services such as interpreters for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, large print or Braille, are requested to contact Laney Fisher at (512) 463-5394 at least four (4) business days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

MINUTES

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ARCHEOLOGY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Videoconference Meeting

October 27, 2020

9:30 A.M.

Note: For the full text of action items, please contact the Texas Historical Commission at P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711 or call 512.463-1858

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jim Bruseth opened the Archeology Committee (AC) meeting on October 27th, 2020 at 09:53 am. Bruseth announced that the meeting was being held in conformance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, and notice had been properly posted with the Secretary of State's Office as required.

Bruseth introduced himself as the Archeology Committee Chair. He asked the members to state if they were present as he called the names.

Members Present

Jim Bruseth (Present)
Tom Perini (Present)
Pete Peterson (Present)
Earl Broussard (Present)

Members Absent

Bruseth completed the roll call, announced that all members were present, and opened the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

Bruseth called for the approval of minutes for the June 16th, 2020 Archeology Committee minutes. He asked if the commissioners had any changes to the minutes that they would like to bring forth.

Bruseth heard no call for corrections and moved on to approve the June 16th, 2020 Archeology Committee minutes. He asked for a commissioner to move the motion forward.

Pete Peterson moved first, and Earl Broussard seconded.

Bruseth called for the vote, heard no opposition, and moved forward to approve the minutes.

3. Discussion on the *La Belle* and 1154 collections held at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History.

Bruseth asked Brad Jones the director of the Archeology Division to lead out the discussion on Item 3.

Jones thanked Bruseth. He mentioned that he was asked to review the Corpus Christi's Museum of Science and History's *La Belle* and 1554 collections. Jones mentioned that the museum was the first repository to be certified by the Texas Historical Commission (THC). He shared that the museum served as the official home of the *La Belle* and 1554 shipwrecks. The 1554 shipwrecks were excavated by the THC in the 1970s after being salvaged in the 1960s.

Jones informed the commissioner's that these collections were very important. He announced that following Hurricane Harvey the THC became concerned with the vulnerability of these collections.

Jones referenced PowerPoint slides that showcased the location of the museum on Corpus Christi Bay. He reported that the museum suffered minimal damage and low-level flooding. In response to this Jones was asked to appraise both collections. He calculated the value by assessing what it would cost to re-excavate the projects and by determining the significance of the holdings within each collection. The total value of both collections came out to 25 million dollars. Jones noted that both collections were irreplaceable.

Jones expressed concern regarding the museums capacity to care for the collections. He noted that the museum used to have a robust staff including archeologist, conservators, and a broader collections department. Jones shared that today the museum only has a single collections manager. The THC has been heavily involved with managing both collections from a far.

Jones wanted the commission to begin thinking about transferring the collections to a location less likely to be hit by a storm.

Bruseth thanked Jones. He believed that the serious consideration of the collections was imperative. He pointed to the location of the museum on the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. Bruseth noted that the museum was only a few feet above sea level and that it was a matter of time before a major storm would hit the area. Consideration was given to the age of the museum and how the building would hold up to contemporary environmental dangers. Bruseth encouraged investigating the removal of the collections from the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History and noted that the THC was the custodian of the *La Belle* collection for the Republic of France.

Bruseth called for additional comments.

Pete Peterson asked two questions. He asked if the THC had consulted with any insurance companies regarding the value of the collections and if there was a planned home for both collections if they were moved.

Bruseth thanked Peterson and asked Jones to address the questions.

Jones answered that the THC had not contacted a professional insurance appraisal team. Jones noted that he did request the collections documentation that the museum held. He explained that the museum was a state entity and therefore did not hold insurance. Jones utilized the loan appraisal guidance from the Bob Bullock State History Museum to evaluate the collections.

Jones borrowed the methodology of pricing re-excavation efforts from the THC's Historic Sites Division. He addressed where the collections could be housed and noted that the state had options. Jones expressed the idea of expanding the Wheel Lane Archeology Lab or the Historic Sites Center for Artifact Reserach in Austin. He noted that it would be difficult to move immediately but could be accomplished in a short

time. Jones added that the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History served as the repository for smaller coastal museums and that providing safe spaces away from the coast would be ideal in the long run.

Peterson agreed that this was a sign to move forward on expanding the curation space that the THC holds.

Jones concurred with Peterson and explained that the Historic Sites Division had always planned for including the *La Belle* and 1554 collections.

Peterson thanked Jones.

Earl Broussard asked if there had been any official response from the museum in Corpus Christi and if they took a position.

Jones explained that he had only informally explored this idea with the curator in Corpus Christi. He noted that in the past the museum had expressed concern with the responsibilities that came with housing these collections. Jones shared that the THC had not requested or received a formal response from the museum.

Bruseth asked for further comments. He noted that moving the collections would be important to protect against future environmental disaster and that the commission should keep it on their radar screen.

Bruseth concluded the discussion on Item 3.

4. Division Director's Report

Jones provided updates on the Archeology Division. He noted that the division had finally become fully staffed. Taylor Bowden joined in July and specialized on Hurricane Harvey and faunal analysis projects. Maximilian Hall came in August and replaced Nick Barrett. Hall came from the Center for Archaeological Studies where he served as the Collections Manager and now handled curation and internal administrative roles. Marie Archambeault rejoined the commission in August and focused on Southeast Texas review and served as the Tribal Liaison. Jones explained that Archambeault had extensive experience with indigenous federally recognized communities in Texas. Jones noted that he was happy to have the new additions and that this would lead to more archeology.

Jones shared a brief update on regional archeology and marine activity. He noted that the pandemic had provided little opportunity for field work. Jones explained that it had limited his staff's ability to go into the field. He highlighted a few images to the commissioners that showed THC archeologist in the field. He noted that Tiffany Osburn had conducted work surrounding a midden that would serve as the site for the Texas Archeological Society's field school. He pointed to images that showed THC archeologist inspecting construction projects.

Jones announced that his staff had prepared for Texas Archeology Month (TAM). He shared that TAM had taken a different course due to the pandemic. Jones shared that in-person events had been curtailed and that his staff had taken the opportunity to build a calendar filled with virtual TAM activities. The virtual calendar led to collaboration with partner institutions and the online content provided a broader audience. Jones thanked the THC's IT and Communication staff for building a virtual calendar and YouTube playlist. He commended Drew Sitters for his compilation of 20 virtual talks on regional archaeology. Jones thanked TAM coordinator Maggie Moore and Maximilian Hall for their collaboration.

Jones announced that he remained the CFCP coordinator and that he was excited to receive an application from the Witte Museum in San Antonio. He had met with the Witte a year ago to discuss the possibility of becoming a certified curatorial facility. The Witte submitted an excellent application that was approved. The Witte moved into their six-month self-evaluation period. He hoped that he would be able to add the Witte as a certified repository. Jones informed the commissioners that the Witte already managed archeological sites and that they held interesting collections.

Jones updated the commissioners on past activities. He reported that state marine archeologist Amy Borgens had just returned from working with the National Park Service (NPS) on marine remote sensing that was funded by the NPS. The project re-assessed the 1554 shipwrecks. Jones reported that they had identified the locations of the ships and the Spanish salvage ship. He hoped that in the future the NPS would be interested in partnering with the THC.

Jones reported on Rebecca Shelton's work with the Archaeological Stewards network. Shelton participated in a nationwide virtual archeological stewardship program workshop. He noted that it was a great opportunity to showcase the Texas stewardship network and to learn about other programs.

Jones concluded that the staff participated in the virtual Council of Texas Archeologist meeting and that it would remain difficult to plan future activities due to the continued pandemic. He stated that there weren't many events scheduled but that opportunities would arise.

Bruseth thanked Jones for the updates.

5. Adjournment

Bruseth thanked the commission members for participating in the meeting. He asked for a commissioner to motion for adjournment.

Peterson moved and the meeting was adjourned.

Item 3

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Item 8.2
Texas Historical Commission
Quarterly Meeting
February 3, 2021

Consider the re-certification of the THC's Curatorial Facility for Artifact Research, Travis County, under the Curatorial Facilities Certification Program for a ten-year period

Background:

The Curatorial Facility for Artifact Research (CFAR) applied for recertification as a curatorial facility under the Curatorial Facility Certification Program in August 2020. The CFAR submitted revised Collections Management Policy and procedures documents, and a field review was conducted on December 17, 2020. Based on an analysis of the documents and the overall excellence of the facility, staff has made a recommendation to the Archeology Committee to approve the re-certification of CFAR for another ten-year period.

Suggested motion:

Move that the Commission approve the re-certification of the THC's Curatorial Facility for Artifact Research, Travis County under the Curatorial Facilities Certification Program for a ten-year period.