

HISTORIC ARKANSAS MUSEUM COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
February 17, 2023

Commissioners Present:

James Warren, Chair
John Greer, Vice Chair
Gordon Rather, Secretary
Rex Nelson
Vanessa Norton McKuin
Marshall Butler
Ann Jennings Shackelford
Kyle Wilson
Tracey Hendren

Commissioners Absent:

Frances Mitchell Ross, Chair Emerita

Historic Arkansas Museum Staff Present:

Stephanie Haught Wade, Executive Director
Joleen Linson, Assistant Director
Victoria Chandler, Curator of Collections
Mark Mourier, Accounting

Visitor:

Jimmy Bryant, Division of Arkansas Heritage Director
Daniel Faulkner, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage & Tourism General Counsel
Elaine Lienhart, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage & Tourism Executive Assistant

Call to Order:

Commission Chair James Warren called the meeting to order at 12:00pm. The meeting was held via Zoom with an in-person meeting option as well.

Approval of Minutes:

Commission Chair James Warren requested a motion to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2023, meeting as distributed. Commissioner Rex Nelson moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Marshall Butler seconded, and the motion passed.

Financial Report:

Museum Director Stephanie Wade reported on the balance of state funds. As of February 2, 2023, the Historic Arkansas Museum state funds balance was \$1,301,171.91, and our financial reports show that everything is in good standing. Ms. Wade sent additional January budgets for the Conservation Tax fund

and the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council fund to the Commissioners for review. These two funds reflect the majority of money available in the museum budget.

Museum Update:

Museum Director Stephanie Wade remarked that the death of Site Manager, Tim Honeysuckle, has been challenging for staff as he was a dear colleague and friend. Tim's memorial service was held February 4, 2023, and numerous staff attended as well as DAH Director Jimmy Bryant. The museum has not been given approval to fill his position yet due to the hiring freeze but hopes to have that approval soon. Director Wade received a nice note from former ADPHT Secretary Stacy Hurst thanking the Commission for the generous memorial gift in her mother's name.

A graph was shared with the Commissioners displaying January visitation numbers for 2021, 2022 and 2023. For January 2023, the total visitation number was 1,740 with 140 of those offsite. A second graph was shared that compared museum store sales for January 2021, 2022 and 2023. Museum store sales for January 2023 totaled \$2110.74.

Museum Assistant Director Joleen Linson reported on site and facilities. Natalie Fulton, Security Supervisor, started her position on January 23, 2023. Sensors were installed in the air return units to alert if there are leaks. The trees on the grounds are going to be trimmed next week, eliminating the extensive mistletoe growth. New flooring is scheduled to be placed in the living history office and in the green room behind the stage. Carpentry repairs are being conducted on the grounds as well .

Museum Assistant Director Joleen Linson provided the Education report as Ian Beard, Education Director, was absent. Marianne Nolley started part time on February 6, 2023, in the Education Department assisting Casey Marshall with School Programs. In January, Living History Saturdays' attendance totaled 120. This month's theme has been "Sew the Seeds of Love" - the programming has included sowing seeds for a spring garden and hand sewing techniques by textile artists. As part of Black History Month, wedding traditions in the enslaved community are being discussed. The March 2023 theme will be "Ho for the Diggings!" as the popularity of the California Gold Rush is explored. Ian Beard, Amy Armstrong, Casey Marshall, Leon Tidwell and Morgan Weithman attended the Arkansas Living History Association conference in Paragould, AR from February 10 – 12, 2023. All presented sessions at the conference. Presentation submissions were sent as well for the national Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums conference in June 2023 in Ohio, and Ian Beard, Amy Armstrong and Morgan Weithman were selected to present. In the blacksmith shop, Casey Marshall and Lin Rhea completed a cook stand for the Brownlee Kitchen, which will assist the staff with their cooking demonstrations.

Curator of Collections Victoria Chandler presented the Exhibits, Collections and Arkansas Made report. Ms. Chandler reported the opening of a new exhibit, *Mismatch: Eliseo Casiano and Abigail Smithson*, in the Trinity Gallery on February 10, 2023 in conjunction with 2nd Friday Art Night. Work continues on the Knife Gallery which we plan to open this Spring. A new traveling exhibit from the American Folk Art Museum, featuring Masonic history and objects, will open in August 2023. Ms. Chandler shared a recent acquisition by Henri Linton, a sweeping aerial view painting, called *Arkansas River #25*. It is 47" x 50" and is dated 1991.

Museum Community Engagement Director Ellen Korenblat was absent, and Ms. Wade reported on her behalf. The Museum Store Manager position opened, and interviews were held. 2nd Friday Art Night on February 10, 2023, was a Valentine themed event. Live music was by Love Notes, a trio of John Willis, Jessica Mylonas and Phillip Rex Huddleston. They performed songs of love and loss and drew a good crowd. The Education Department showcased how to personalize and assemble Victorian cards from the early years of Valentine's Day, as the holiday boomed in the 1840s. The Trinity Gallery exhibit opening was also part of the evening's festivities. The annual Louise Loughborough Volunteer Appreciation Party was held on February 14, 2023, from 4:00 - 6:00pm. Heavy appetizers from Scallions restaurant and sugar cookies from Community Bakery were a big hit with the crowd. Several volunteers were awarded certificates acknowledging their contributions. Jimmy Bryant, Director of Arkansas Heritage, attended and provided remarks. This event has typically been a luncheon, but it was decided to change the time to see if more people would attend at the end of the workday. The attendance number was lower this year so the timing for next year will be reevaluated. Loughborough Trust funds approved by the Commission covered the expenses for the event. There were a couple of public use events this month: the memorial reception for Alston Jennings, Jr.; UALR Evenings with History; Arkansas Arts Council workshop; and Arkansas Herb Society lunch and meeting. Ms. Wade received thank you notes from Nancy Jennings, Margaret Jennings and Commissioner Ann Jennings Shackelford in appreciation of the staff's efforts with the memorial reception. The museum was represented at the Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau's unveiling of their tourism master plan a few weeks ago. Ellen Korenblat, Tricia Spione and Sherry Stevenson set up and worked a booth. Amy Armstrong came in period dress which attracted a lot of positive attention.

Historic Arkansas Museum Foundation:

Museum Director Stephanie Wade reported that the first Foundation Board meeting of the year was held January 26, 2023. Ms. Erin Finzer is serving as Board President. A new Board member orientation was held on February 6, 2023, and attended by members Mary Claire Hill Imbro, Molly McNulty, Gregory Simril, Sarah Thomas, and Bryan Hernandez.

Other Business:

Museum Director Stephanie Wade asked if the fully executed Memorandum of Understanding should be sent to all Commissioners. Commissioner Kyle Wilson stated that it can just be sent to Commissioner Warren and Commissioner Rather for their records.

The Arkansas Museums Association annual conference will be held March 27 – 29, 2023, and the Historic Arkansas Museum and Central Arkansas Library System are serving as hosts. The museum will have registration and coffee each morning, and the sessions (with the exception of Casey Marshall's blacksmith workshop and Amy Armstrong's Victorian hair art workshop, which will both take place on the museum grounds) will be in the CALS conference rooms. The museum is hosting the opening reception on March 27 from 5:00 – 7:00pm. There will be heavy appetizers, beer and wine served in the atrium. The historic grounds, galleries, and museum store will be open. Ms. Wade asked if the Commission would like to contribute up to \$500 to help cover expenses for the event. Assistant Director Joleen Linson added that several museum staff and Director Wade will be presenting at the conference, as well as Commissioner Vanessa McKuin through her work at Historic Cane Hill.

Commissioner John Greer moved to approve \$500.00 from the Loughborough Trust to assist with expenses for the evening reception on March 27, 2023. Commissioner Marshall Butler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

A vote was held to reinstate Commissioner Kyle Wilson based on his 3 consecutive absences due to work conflicts. Commissioner Ann Shackelford moved to approve the reinstatement of Commissioner Wilson, Commissioner Marshall Butler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Ann Shackelford commented how much she appreciated the level of care provided by the museum staff during the planning and execution of her brother's memorial event. Commissioner James Warren noted that the Commission and museum have always operated as a supportive family.

Commissioner Warren also commented on a new exhibit at the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center that showcases Scipio Africanus Jones and his involvement with the Elaine Race Riots and related Supreme Court ruling. He recommended everyone take a moment to see the exhibit which runs through May 31, 2023.

Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting of the Historic Arkansas Museum Commission will be held Friday, March 17, 2023, at 12:00pm via Zoom. Museum Director Stephanie Wade will send instructions to join the meeting. Lunch will be provided in the Loughborough Conference Room.

Adjournment:

With no other business to discuss, Commission Chair James Warren adjourned the meeting at 12:25 pm.

Gordon S. Rather, Jr. Secretary