

MINUTES
TEXAS HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD
February 25, 2021

The Texas Historical Records Advisory Board (THRAB) meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. on February 25, 2021. Due to Governor Greg Abbott's March 13, 2020 proclamation of a state of disaster affecting all counties in Texas due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Governor's March 16, 2020 suspension of certain provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, the meeting was held by video webinar, as authorized under Texas Government Code §551.127. Members of the public had access and a means to participate in this meeting, by two-way communication and could register for the webinar by visiting: <https://zoom.us/j/94464505229>.

Members Present: Jelain Chubb, coordinator; Linda Barrett, Phyllis Earles, Teri Flack, Kristy Sorensen, Melissa Gonzales

Members Absent: Malinda Cowen, Bob Glenn, Leslie Stapleton

Also Present: Mark Smith, Director and Librarian, Gloria Meraz, Assistant State Librarian, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

Staff Support: Peggy Price, principal assistant

1. Welcome and introductions

Jelain Chubb welcomed board members and reviewed procedures specific to videoconferencing for open meetings.

2. Roll call for members and establishment of quorum

Chubb called roll and established a quorum with Kristy Sorensen, Linda Barrett, Teri Flack, Melissa Gonzales and Phyllis Earles present. Malinda Cowen and Leslie Stapleton were absent as well as Bob Glenn, who has retired from the board.

3. Approve minutes of the October 23, 2020 meeting

Kristy Sorensen moved to approve the minutes and Linda Barrett seconded. The board approved minutes for October 23, 2020 with a minor correction.

4. Public comment. Members of the public should state their full name and organization affiliation, if any, before speaking.

No public comment.

5. Consideration of resolutions and certificates of appreciation

No consideration of resolutions or certificates of appreciation were proposed at this meeting. Chubb shared with the board that the meeting was the final one for member Teri Flack, as her term ended in 2021. Chubb also mentioned that the governor would need to appoint new members to replace Malinda Cowen and Bob Glenn, as their terms had also concluded.

6. Update on the Texas State Library and Archives Commission's activities

Chubb informed the board that long-time TSLAC employee and assistant director for archives, Laura Saegert, retired in December after 39 years. Chubb expressed her deep appreciation for Saegert's

extensive contributions to the program, especially during the 10 years Chubb has been with the agency. Chubb reported that the position will be advertised as assistant state archivist, which is a more descriptive title. Chubb shared that the archives program was audited in 2020 and the outcome was satisfactory.

Mark Smith discussed the State Archives strategic plan, which received positive reactions from members of the commission, and that a preservation plan recommended as part of the audit will be incorporated in the next revision. Smith informed the board that the agency is also reviewing its security plans to safeguard the facility, staff, and collections. Regarding the legislative session and budget appropriations, Smith said that while deeper cuts were anticipated, the five percent decrease was a carryover from the last biennium and the agency will be able to absorb it. In its FY22-23 Legislative Appropriation Request TSLAC is requesting funds for architectural design work for construction of new storage space for state records, some of which are archival. It is an ongoing challenge to inform legislators of the importance of storing paper records, even though TSLAC receives two to four thousand cubic feet of paper archival records each year.

Gloria Meraz reported that she is monitoring the current legislative session, which has been delayed by the events of last week (the winter storm) and that there are no current bills requiring the attention of the board. She will inform THRAB of any new issues that arise that may need advocacy.

Chubb expanded on the comprehensive audit performed on the State Archives and described how every aspect of archival work was analyzed. One recommendation was to create a preservation plan, which will be completed over the next eighteen months. Overall, it was a strong audit.

7. Discussion of impact of COVID-19 on archives in Texas

Chubb opened a discussion on how Texas archives are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. TSLAC has continued to offer public services by appointment, while all other major archives in Austin have not reopened. Staff work from home and rotate working on site. Kristy Sorensen shared that her archives at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin remains closed to the public and staff work from home, with visits to the repository to serve remote patrons as needed. Sorensen said that most of their researchers were already remote visitors, but a new challenge presented by the pandemic and closures has been the ability to receive donations of materials. Linda Barrett reported that the Fort Worth Public Library is still closed to the public, with archival researchers accommodated by appointment and in accordance with COVID-19 protocols. They have seen increased activity in their remote patrons with reference services and she described similar challenges with accepting donations.

At Prairie View A&M, Phyllis Earles described multiple challenges presented by recent events. They experienced a cyber attack prior to the winter storm and that has created more issues with technology on campus. As far as services, the students attend virtual classes, but the library is open. She and her staff were finding projects for work study students to complete from home and have recently been able to bring them back to campus. Earles has had additional duties as she has been appointed to the Ruth J. Simmons Center for Race and Justice archival working committee and tasked with setting up protocols for the students working in the archives during COVID. Melissa Gonzales reported that she and the Houston Community College staff have been off-site throughout the pandemic and that working with records remotely has specific challenges, such as not being able to scan physical items at home. Gonzales offered insight into what SAA and others have been speculating about a post-COVID work landscape and what the “new normal” may look like. Chubb said that the remote work will most likely continue through December. TSLAC keeps a skeleton crew on-site and that processing continues.

Teri Flack provided insight from a researcher's perspective. Flack offered an anecdote where she had requested a number of pages from a book held in an archive and the repository staff scanned the entire volume and offered it up on their website. Flack received the entire volume in addition to her request and it seemed that everyone benefitted with the expanded access. Flack applauded the archives for staying open and appreciates the virtual programming like the research webinars TSLAC is offering.

8. Discussion of current State Board Programming Grant activities

Chubb discussed the status of the 2020 NHPRC grant. The current grant was extended through June of 2021 and the next grant will begin July 1, 2021. The pandemic has prevented THRAB from completing some of its objectives, like funding TARO workshops. Chubb met with the TARO committee and they proposed to spend the money on hiring a contractor to edit at least 200 finding aids for smaller repositories at the cost of \$4629. The board supported this reallocation of funds for TARO. All other objectives are on target, with the major items achieved. THRAB supported 30 registrants for the AASLH Basics of Archives course with 80 applicants. The completion rate was 24 out of 30. THRAB will fund awards for Texas History Day. Chubb called for volunteers to judge the award and Earles and Gonzales offered to help. Leslie Stapleton had agreed to serve as a judge prior to the meeting. Linda Barrett is already judging at the regional level. Chubb requested that those judging at any level report their time on the THRAB cost-share form. THRAB also supports a session at the Texas State Historical Association's annual meeting at cost of \$1500. The session is on the Texas Rangers and the Q&A takes place online March 4 at 2:45. Other expenditures were the COSA dues at \$500 and the Texas History Day awards totaling \$500. THRAB saved on the Archives Bazaars, which were virtual, and on the cost of travel to meetings.

For the current grant, THRAB has \$5057.36 remaining. Chubb requested input from the board on how to expend the funds. Suggestions included training on oral history projects, disaster workshops to assist those recovering from the winter storm, preconference workshop registrations, NAGARA spring forum, scholarships for historical society members or others to attend SSA, engage the HBCUs and direct funds to assist students who want to work in archives (stipend, internship, etc.) or assist with training staff on preservation. Mark Smith reminded the board of TSLAC's Texas Treasures grant opportunities. Chubb will follow up with Earles on contact information for the HBCU library community.

9. Discussion of future grants and applications

Chubb explained that the proposal for the grant beginning in 2022 will be due in June. She will include the initiatives THRAB has engaged in previously, including supporting the Archives Bazaars, conference sessions, awards, the poster, and training. Earles suggested a range of ideas involving HBCUs and supporting diversity in archives; she stressed the need for projects with sustainable results. Earles encouraged THRAB to explore initiatives with far-reaching results that help build a foundation for students working in archives, such as internships or stipends that run for two years. Earles also suggested that seasoned researchers like Teri Flack may serve as mentors. Chubb will present ideas to Dan Stokes of NHPRC and work from there. THRAB may want to partner with the TSLAC foundation or other groups. In conclusion, Chubb thanked Teri Flack for her service.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:11p.m.

Approved, June 2, 2021.