

**PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION**  
**SEPTEMBER 9, 2020**  
**MINUTES**

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission met on September 9, 2020 via Skype for Business. The following Commissioners were present: Nancy Moses – Chair, Ophelia Chambliss, William Lewis, Andrew Masich, Representative Robert Matzie, Fred Powell, Kate Flessner for Senator Joseph Scarnati, Kenneth Turner, Representative Parke Wentling, Philip Zimmerman and Glenn Miller (Department of Education).

The following staff were present: Andrea Lowery, David Bohanick, David Carmicheal, Beth Hager, Andrea MacDonald, Brenda Reigle, Howard Pollman, Scott Doyle and Karen Galle. Rodney Akers and Gerard Leone served as legal counsel. Glenn Holliman represented the Pennsylvania Heritage Foundation.

Members of the public who joined the meeting: Danielle Trynoski and Sarah Collier

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

PHMC Chairwoman, Nancy Moses called the meeting to order at 10am. At this time, she asked everyone on the call to introduce themselves.

**II. APPROVAL OF JUNE 3, 2020 MINUTES**

Chairwoman Nancy Moses called for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 3, 2020 meeting. MOTION: (Turner/Powell) Motion to accept the minutes as presented from June 3, 2020 meeting was approved. 11 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention.

**III. CHAIRWOMAN'S REMARKS**

Chairwoman Nancy reported that at the beginning of the pandemic she began to read books, biographies, letters, and diaries of the late 1930s and 1940s that would give her some perspective on

what we are experiencing today. We are currently in the middle of a pandemic, a major economic crisis, concern about climate change, and conversations about inequities for people of color.

In 2015, PHMC endorsed a document written called “The Value of History”. One important statement from the document is: “History, saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. History is crucial to preserving democracy for the future by explain our shared past. Through the preservation of authentic, meaningful places, documents, artifacts, images, and stores, we leave a foundation upon which future Americans can build. Without the preservation of our histories, future citizens will have no grounding in what it means to be an American.”

PHMC is the official steward of Pennsylvania history. The history we preserve is not frozen as history evolves as new facts come to life and as interpretations change. Americans have always reframed our national story, we see the same facts in different light, we uncover hidden truths, we embrace whose history has been ignored and celebrate those that contributions have been marginalized. You will find very different interpretations in history books from the 1950s to current textbooks.

Our role in these times is to understand and represent the breadth of Pennsylvania’s rich history; each commissioner is politically astute and represent constituents. All of us care deeply about Pennsylvania history. When commissioners meet either virtually or in person, we reach beyond any of these concerns. We focus on our collective power to share and preserve Pennsylvania’s remarkable past. History shows us that how times can be complicated, challenging, confusing and contentious. Despite the struggles, the problems, and differences our nation continues to survive.

#### **IV. TRIBUTE TO DAVID SCHUYLER**

Andrea Lowery reported that PHMC Commissioner David Schuyler died unexpectedly on July 24, 2020. Some of you may have known David primarily as a commissioner, he was also passionate about historic preservation. For many years, David served on the Historic Preservation Board and valued his time as a commissioner. Andrea read the following email from December 2017 he wrote to her: “As a commissioner I do my best not to be pushy but rather to support of our staff and our agenda before the folks in the capitol and on occasion to throw ideas, some of which are actually helpful.” David was passionate about public history and generous with his time far beyond PHMC. He shared his love of history with his students at Franklin and Marshall College where he served as Professor of Humanities and American Studies for a remarkable 40 years. He was a wonderful teacher who took a genuine interest in his young scholars, always supporting and encouraging them. David will live on through countless students he inspired.

David was also treasured within the many organizations he served including the Olana State Historic Site in New York and the PA Historical Association and Urban History Association. He also served on a number of editorial boards in a variety of publications including The Journal of Planning History, The Hudson River Valley Review, the Fredrick Law Olmstead Papers and the North American Landscape Series at the John Hopkins University Press. David will be remembered by those who did not know him through his award-winning books on environmental history, urban development, and local history. We are glad he spent so much of his time with us and will miss not only his thoughtful contributions but also his kind spirit.

#### **V. PHMC AND PHF REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS**

**STATE MUSEUM** – Beth Hager reported that her staff began the process of removing the mannequins in the Delaware Indian Village dioramas this summer. As an interim step before the

complete revision of the Archaeology Gallery can be accomplished, a staff task forces is working with Laura Allen, former American Museum of Natural History specialist and consultant to our 3<sup>rd</sup> floor interpretive plan and Mammal Hall to develop a new engaging and more culturally sensitive interpretation of the village.

One of the major challenges over the past several months has been decision making regarding the annual Art of the State exhibition which was to have opened in mid-June. When the pandemic hit, we were in the midst of processing artists' submissions and assembling art jurors. Throughout the coronavirus crisis, we have been committed to offering this exhibition. Because we were originally planned to re-open the museum in July, we went ahead with art intake. We will officially open the virtual awards ceremony distributed over social media channels on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. In addition, we are also offering an online 360-degree view of the exhibit. More information on this exhibit can be found at: <http://statemuseumpa.org/aos2020/>. Art of the State is scheduled through January 3, 2021.

**HISTORIC SITES AND MUSEUMS** - Brenda Reigle read the following retirement resolution for Walter Rybka:

**WHEREAS** Walter P. Rybka prepared himself for a career in the sail training and museum professions by obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in speech and theater from Macalester College;

**WHEREAS** Walter spent his 27-year museum career with the PHMC. Walter started his professional career aboard the schooner *Pioneer*, built in 1885 in Chester, Delaware County, the only surviving American iron-hulled sailing vessel, rising to the rank of Master. Walter oversaw the restoration of the sailing barque *Elissa* beginning in 1977 and served as sail training deck officer with the *Elissa* from 1983 until 1991. During this time Walter also worked with the South Street Seaport Museum, Mystic Seaport Museum, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the National Maritime Museum, sailing as a mate aboard the *Westward* and *Corwith Cramer* and as master of the *Californian*;

**WHEREAS** Walter was hired as captain of the US Brig Niagara by the PHMC in 1991;

**WHEREAS** under Walter's direction the Niagara has become the centerpiece of the award-winning and well-respected sail training program based at the Erie Maritime Museum which continues to the present day;

**WHEREAS** Walter was promoted to Senior Captain in 2001 to oversee the combined operations of the Erie Maritime Museum and the US Brig Niagara;

**WHEREAS** Walter was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Sail Training Association (ASTA) in 2008, recognized as “an individual who has dedicated his life’s work to getting people to sail and who has worked to preserve the traditions and skills of sailing;”

**WHEREAS** as an author, Walter has furthered the PHMC’s scholarship role, contributing to publications from PHMC exhibit catalogs, short articles, and complete works, authoring the books *The US Brig Niagara Crew Handbook (1992)* and *The Lake Erie Campaign of 1813: I Shall Fight Them This Day (2012)*;

**WHEREAS** Walter was awarded the National Maritime Historical Society’s Rodney N. Houghton Award for best feature article in *Sea History Magazine* in 2012;

**WHEREAS** Walter has earned the respect and friendship of his colleagues and museum volunteers as well as being a positive influence in the lives of museum and historic site visitors, school students, and interns.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** in recognition of his twenty-seven years of service to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission commends Walter P. Rybka for his professionalism on the occasion of his retirement from the Commission, extends its heartfelt appreciation for his accomplishments on behalf of the Commission and Commonwealth, and extends to him congratulations and best wishes for a long, happy, and fruitful retirement.

Chairwoman Nancy Moses called for a motion to approve the retirement resolution for Walter Rybka as presented. MOTION: (Turner/Masich) Motion to approve the retirement resolution for Walter Rybka was approved. 11 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention.

Sites and museums continue to advance DEIA initiatives. Although the COVID-19 closure caused the bureau to cancel two diversity workshops with consultant Cecile Shellman in March, the workshops are now rescheduled to be held in September via Zoom.

Pennsbury Manor held a Juneteenth program in partnership with the African American Museum of Bucks County.

Brenda also reported that her bureau continues to work with partners to find alternative ownership for Placed Properties. Representative Mary Jo Daley introduced legislation to transfer the Highlands.

**STATE ARCHIVES** – David Carmicheal reported to commissioners that at the next commission meeting, the State Historic Advisory Board will have three nominations to the board for approval. David will send names of about 5 or 6 archivists who would be good additions to the board and ask that commissioners rank them in order of preference. At the December meeting, we would nominate the top 3 preferences for the open seats.

The State Archives is working to identify and promote some of the hidden collections that document the experiences of women, African American and younger people by updating the finding aids and keywords that researchers use to find records.

Because of the pandemic, staff have begun to transcribe many of its oral histories; staff recently completed the Chester Black Experience Oral History. The Chester Black Experience was recorded from 1976 -1977 and includes information about the 1917 Chester Race Riot.

Historic Archives and Records Care Grants (HARC) were awarded, providing access to many diverse collections. Dickenson College is organizing and digitizing their LGBT history project collection; Franklin and Marshall College is working to preserve audio recordings that relate to German language and folk life. The Johnson House Historic Site is working to organize their archives and the Historic Eden Cemetery, the oldest African American owned cemetery in the United States and Philadelphia, is conducting a conservation assessment.

Beginning September 14<sup>th</sup> through September 18<sup>th</sup>, the Pennsylvania State Archives is promoting its “Community History Dialog” a series of five online lunchtime discussions from 12pm to 1:30pm each day. Topics include: *Organizing a Community to Preserve its History* by Barry Loveland; *Capturing Black History through the Lens of Black Art* by Ophelia Chambliss; *What if your History is not Written? Collecting Oral Recollections and Histories*; *Preserving Stories Digitally*; and *Resources: Where to find Money and Assistance*.

**LEGAL** – Rodney Akers, Chief Counsel would like everyone to be aware of that since the onset of the pandemic, counsel have stayed abreast of mitigation measures that the commonwealth is taking in response to the pandemic as part of their ongoing efforts to support the various PHMC bureaus, activities and their initiatives as well as our staff colleagues, just as commonwealth employees. If anyone has questions, please contact either Rodney Akers or Gerard Leone.

## **EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

**Executive Director Report** – Andrea Lowery reported that the commission is currently operating on a 5-month budget. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, we will be looking at a new budget to extend through the end of the fiscal year. Andrea will discuss with legislators the importance of what PHMC is doing and emphasize our continued support of government operations through its virtual programming and how we “message” the agency during the pandemic.

PHMC is operating under a hiring freeze; the administration is being cautious with spending; we have received a few exemptions from the administration to fill some positions. We continue to seek Governors Budget Office (GBO) approval for expenditures related to GGO and Keystone Funding. Revenue is down in the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) due to no admission coming in.

PHMC is establishing a monthly learning series kicking off this month with the Archives Staff presenting the history of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Pennsylvania.

The State Museum continues to work on a comprehensive plan for the renovation of its building and exhibits. Infrastructure improvements include exhibit renovations, addition of two new elevators, introducing some exhibits on the ground floor, reorganizing the ground floor, and adding restrooms. Andrea will provide a more detailed report on the State Museum Master Plan at the December Commission Meeting.

**Legislative Report** – Howard Pollman reported that he is starting to hear from staff on the appropriations committees looking for information as they begin to prepare to work out a budget for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Howard continues to track HB 2812, The Highlands Mansion and Grounds Property Transfer and hopeful that the amendments to the History Code are approved. He will work with leadership to come up with a strategy to get the amendments approved. If they are not passed this time, the amendments will have to be reintroduced.

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE** – Andrea MacDonald shared the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) accomplishments regarding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access. Her office is working through three programs to better identify, document, and celebrate underrepresented stores and places in Pennsylvania. These program areas include: Survey, National Register nominations, and Historical Markers.

Proactive Historic Places Survey – Historic property identification and documents is the foundation of all our work. A Survey Project Manager has been contracted to direct proactive survey work and related research of underrepresented themes and places in Pennsylvania for the next 3 years.

Her office has also partnered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and National Park Service to complete the initial phase of this proactive survey work which is to identify African American churches and cemeteries in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

An important task of the Survey Project Manager will also be to analyze decennial census data by race and ethnicity from 1790-1940 to inform survey priorities. The goal over the next three years is to collect baseline data for areas of Pennsylvania where data gaps exist - which includes 1,100 municipalities in 52 counties.

National Register of Historic Places – Funding is provided by the National Park Service Underrepresented Communities, SHPO staff completed a Multiple Property Documentation Form for African American Churches and Cemeteries to facilitate National Register listing of African American churches and cemeteries across Pennsylvania.

Two years ago, staff began to identify other properties that could benefit from listing in the National Register of Historic Places. To date, the following properties have been listed or will soon be listed in the National Register through this proactive effort: Crawford Grill#2, Allegheny County; Waynesboro Historic District, Franklin County; Mothers' Memorial, Schuylkill County; Mount Tabor AME Zion Church and Cemetery, Cumberland County.

Proactive Historical Marker Nominations – Staff has identified geographic and thematic gaps in the marker program and have contacted partners across the commonwealth to encourage marker nominations for underrepresented subjects and counties. A couple of the Historical Markers supported by this proactive initiative are: Pandenarium, Mercer County and Fighter's Heaven, Schuylkill County. With financial support from Keystone and mitigation funds, SHPO staff have just begun to work to address these gaps.

**Keystone Historic Preservation Grants** – The Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program received 94 applications with requests of over \$4.4 million for the 2019-20 fiscal year. Construction and planning applications were considered separately by three external peer review panels. The ratio of applications between the two categories is based on their respective total grant requests. There were more applicants who requested support for construction activities, there are more recommended awards in that category. Recommendations are organized and ranked within two grant categories: construction and planning projects. Out of 52 applications we have funding to support: 33 construction projects and 19 planning projects.

MOTION: (Chambliss/Lewis) Motion to approve the Keystone Historic Preservation Grants as presented was approved. 10 in favor/0 opposed/1 abstention

**Historical Marker Policy** – Andrea MacDonald provided a brief overview of the Historical Marker Program to commissioners and staff. The current nomination process is published on the PHMC website. The annual deadline for the public to submit nominations is December 1<sup>st</sup>. PHMC receives approximately 50-55 nominations each year. Nominations are evaluated based upon the current criteria which was adopted by the commission on March 4, 2020.

Complete submissions are reviewed by an external Historical Marker Review Panel. The Panel's recommendations are presented to PHMC commissioners at regularly scheduled meetings (typically in March) for a formal vote. Notification of commission action is sent in writing to nominators following the meeting. If a marker was not recommended by the Panel or approved by the Commission, PHMC staff will encourage submission of a revised application in the following year.

Revisions to marker text are typically minor, such as a date correction, and have been handled by staff. We have never officially retired a marker. These issues are two aspects the new policy will address.

For more than a century, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ("Commonwealth") has been marking sites of historical importance in Pennsylvania through the Pennsylvania Historic Commission and then the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission ("PHMC"). PHMC is authorized by 37 Pa.C.S § 303(2) to "mark by proper monuments, tablets or markers, bearing the Commonwealth crest, places or buildings in this Commonwealth where historical or cultural events have transpired or, with the consent of the state or county having jurisdiction, places or buildings outside of this Commonwealth having to do with its history; and arrange for the care or

maintenance of these markers or monuments.” For purposes of this policy, the aforementioned shall be referred to as “Historical Markers.”

The Commonwealth’s Historical Marker program is grounded in scholarship and interpretation, both of which the Commission recognizes can change over time. New information may be discovered, adding context, or proving old interpretation to be inaccurate; cultural shifts occur, meaning once-accepted references or interpretation may become outdated. These changes may periodically require review and revision of existing markers. For these reasons, this policy addresses not only the erection of markers, but also revisions and the possible permanent retirement of markers.

MOTION: (Lewis/Zimmerman) Motion to approve the updated Historical Marker Policy as presented. 11 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention

Kate Flessner reported that Senator Joseph Scarnati suggested that there should be a 2/3 majority vote instead of a majority vote taken to make any modifications, removal, or replacement of markers. Changes must be thoughtful and adhere to and agreed to by a majority of the commission to have those in place moving forward.

MOTION: (Flessner/Lewis) Motion to approve the amended changes by Senator Scarnati to include a “2/3 majority vote”. If the Commission staff or Historical Marker Review Panel recommends the retirement of an Historical Marker, the Commission may approve the retirement and removal of an Historical Marker by a “2/3 majority vote” instead of “majority vote” according to the Commission’s bylaws. Amended changes to the Historical Marker Policy were approved. 11 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention.

**Historical Marker Panel** – Andrea MacDonald reported that marker nominations are reviewed by a panel of five independent experts from across the state. This year, commissioners recommended potential panelists to fill anticipated vacancies.

Panelists serve two years. Returning Panel Member for final year of service include:  
George Deutsch, Executive Director, Erie County Historical Society, representing Northwest PA  
and Leslie Przybylek, Senior Curator, Heinz History Center, representing Southwest PA.

Proposed panelists that would begin their term with reviewing 2021 marker nominations  
are:

Northeast – Carol Dunn, Executive Director, Wayne County Historical Society  
Nominated by Commissioner Representative Parke Wentling

Southeast – Jacqueline Wiggins, President & CEO, Wiggins Tours and More, Philadelphia  
Nominated by Patricia Wilson Aden, President & CEO, African American Museum  
of Philadelphia

Central – Jim McClure, retired editor York Daily Record  
Nominated by Commissioner Ophelia Chambliss

MOTION: (Turner/Zimmerman) the Historic Marker Panel recommendations were approved. 11 in  
favor/0 opposed/0 abstention.

**PENNSYLVANIA HERITAGE FOUNDATION** – Glenn Holliman reported that the  
Pennsylvania Heritage Foundation budget is in good shape. Our staff of two continues to work  
very hard to be relevant, and visible during this most unusual year. Only about 11% of the returned  
renewals for PHF Family Individual and contributor memberships have requested to adjust their  
renewal date (27 of 246). This has shown that PHF's membership base is loyal and supports the  
works of the Foundation. Staff are planning an e-Newsletter to be launched soon that would be  
sent to nonmembers with the focus on being a marketing tool for membership.

The Foundation continues to increase its presence on Facebook and currently, has over  
3,500 followers.

Due to the current situation, the Foundation is inhibited from moving forward with raising  
funds for PHMC. In the future, the Foundation can establish a resource window to involve persons  
who have the ability to respond to our challenges. The Foundation wants to do all it can to develop

and share the resources so that we may continue in our very important effort to share the history of the commonwealth with everyone.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

Chairwoman Nancy Moses reported that William Lewis has been serving as the commission's representative on the Historic Marker Panel. Recently, PHMC Commissioner Ken Turner offered to serve as another non-voting member of the Historic Marker Panel. PHMC Commissioner Ophelia Chambliss has previously served on the panel in the past. Chairwoman Nancy Moses thanks PHMC Commissioner Lewis, Turner and Chambliss for their continued support in PHMC programs.

## **VI. TASK FORCE REPORTS**

Strategic Planning – Andrea Lowery updated PHMC Commissioners and staff on the Strategic Plan. She shared some of the major goals and objectives that were identified and associated with the Strategic Plan and a plan for implementation.

Last December, a survey was conducted looking for input from stakeholders on what PHMC does/does not do well and what we should/should not do. A total of 447 responses was received (252 public, 106 employees, 82 stakeholders and 7 commissioners respond). Staff development of SWOT analysis was conducted with staff across the agency to review stakeholder input but was paused in planning due to pandemic. We have now resumed working to complete the Strategic Plan with an analysis of existing commitments and priorities.

The last time we discussed the Strategic Plan, we arrived on the following mission and vision statements: MISSION - "We discover, protect and promote Pennsylvania's irreplaceable history. We inspire others to value and use our shared past in relevant ways." VISION – "We make Pennsylvania history engaging and relevant for all."

When we did our SWAT analysis and really looked the responses received from stakeholders the areas of focus include Sustainability, Leading and Partnering, Access, Communications, Innovation and Inclusion, and Workplace Culture.

Andrea offered to schedule a separate time for PHMC Commissioners who have questions or recommendations regarding the Strategic Plan to meet virtually.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

PHMC Chairwoman, Nancy Moses adjourned the meeting at 12:05pm