

**Historical Advisory Committee (HAC)
Minutes April 13, 2022**

Meeting held at the Mid County Regional Library, Meeting Room A/B.

Committee Members

Dianne Munson
Theresa Murtha
Pat Spence
Valerie Colbert
Clare Riggs
Stephen Valdes

Present

Pat Spence
Clare Riggs
Stephen Valdes
Dianne Munson
Theresa Murtha

Not Present

Valarie Colbert

BOCC Liaison:

Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch

Guests

Libraries & History Staff

Jennifer Zoebelein
Tina Ranney

9:00 a.m. Roll Call: Valarie Colbert Absent

Approval of March meeting minutes: Dianne requested motion to approve. Clare motioned to approve, Stephen 2nd. All in favor. Minutes approved.

Agenda Items:

Discussion with Sean Doherty (Tourism Director) regarding promotion of historical and heritage assets in Charlotte County.

Meeting opened with Sean Doherty (Tourism Director) explaining that he is here at the meeting to listen and give insight into how the tourism dept can assist with the historical tourism document/suggestions and one of the things they do is try to attract visitors to destinations and they focus on trying to reach those visitors that are looking for places to go and try to identify what their primary purpose for visiting is. Something like this document, the cultural and heritage stuff is an enhancement to visitors that are already here some exceptions would be places like St. Augustine that people will visit just for the history of it. We focus on drawing people in because of our beaches, fishing, water sports etc. He then spoke about what they can do to help is add content to the website that will help direct people to historical places of interest in the area. They just launched a new website back in January with some enhanced and easier to use features. He also explained how they occasionally will do some niche marketing, via email and or social media even though what they normally do is attract people for their primary reason for visiting. They could use these methods for specific events related to historical tourism. Commissioner Deutsch commented that the reason Mr. Doherty was asked to join the meeting today, was the concept that this group is aware of the various reasons people come to the area to visit, but they also know that there are some people that are history buffs and we think that between the historical markers and some of the sites we have, that developing a relationship with tourism, would encourage more folks to take advantage of some of the

historical sites and would provide another avenue for tourism to get people to come to the area. Sean agreed, saying or at least enhance their experience when they come, which does lead to repeat visitation. Theresa commented we were hoping that you would help, our relationship, would help enlighten us what we should be planning community wise to help elevate history here, because there may be some things were not doing. Commissioner Deutsch suggested as in a partnership. Stephen asked if they break down tourist groups, as in, he is curious how often they get veteran groups interested in reunions. Sean replied only with things they are directly involved in, he has just hired a new meeting sales manager, he'll be focusing on of all their meeting and convention sales. Which will also include those types of events and they will be working with resorts in the area to get further information on all those types of events and tourism. Stephen asked, how about the military museum, because they are working on that, working on getting military groups to come to the area and asked Sean if they have a working relationship with them. Sean said yes, and they would be in contact with them soon. Stephen then mentioned that they had just put together, a day trips from Punta Gorda to the 11 army airfields that are within a day trip and various other side trips involving military history interests. Sean stated that these are things they will be working on. Stephen asked who he should contact, and Sean told him Jeff Berg. Stephen mentioned that they are trying to get a grant to set these up as maps. Commissioner Deutsch also mentioned that there are 29,000 veterans in Charlotte County and our population is officially 200,000 now. Stephen then asked about Ponce DeLeon and why in the past it was a bigger deal than it now, Theresa agreed and stated that we are lacking a large annual celebration that could be focused on that. She then says that historical evidence shows that he probably did land here. Sean said they have programs that help fund events like that, they would just have to fill out an application through their office. Application deadlines are usually around the end of February; however, they can still take applications if there is still funding. One of the stipulations would be that the events occur in the off season. Stephen then mentioned that this year there will be the conquistador regatta that pulls in somewhere around 45 and 50 ships a year and suggests this could be made into a "festival" that would draw in more people. Theresa agreed this would be a good idea. Sean also mentioned that their program is to support new events not necessarily "annual". If events are moved from in season to out of season they could be classified as new. There were also discussions about different airshows in the area and maybe somehow working with them when scheduling our air show in Punta Gorda to maximize the attendance.

Commissioner Deutsch brought up the importance of getting younger people to participate and join various community groups, or historical groups. Theresa stated that would not happen, that younger people are not interested. Young is 60 in these groups.

Stephen then asked Sean, So, getting down to the reality, what can we do for you, how can we help you? To him, there is only one thing that motivates you and there's only one thing that motivates every company. Can I make money, or can I save money? So, I can make you money. How can we help you make money? Sean replied that it's not about them making money for themselves, it's about making money for the industry. So, like he was saying before, it's about getting things on the website. Pureflorida.com. This is where all the local attractions are listed. While there is nothing listed about local history, he would need the group to provide him with content so it can be placed on the website. Theresa also mentioned she had found a website called fun things to do kids (she's not sure of the exact name) and she was shocked to see her history center listed as well as the military heritage museum. They had a lot of content. She asked if there was any way for them to link to this site? Sean said yes, they can link to other sites, but the goal is to keep people on their website. Theresa then said there's no reason they couldn't mimic something like that. Sean stated again, if they are given

the content, they can add it to their website. Commissioner Deutsch then asked if Gaines Park was on their site, Sean said yes, because all of the county parks are listed, and the commissioner also mentioned that the markers should be on there as well. Theresa said yes, she was going to bring that up also. There are all kind of markers and suggested that the committee try to come up with a consolidated list. Theresa asked Jennifer about the telling our story signs, Jennifer said videos of the dedications are on the website, but there is not a "list". Stephen the commented that one of the things has learned since starting the "day Trips" project is, if you're going to send people somewhere, they have to have something to see. There should be some structure, a tangible something to see. Theresa then said she doesn't necessarily agree with that. She thinks there is something beyond seeing the site.

Sean then went back to mentioning content and perhaps structuring an itinerary to help guide people to the historical areas. Jennifer mentioned that some of the markers are pretty remote, and it's important to make the content relevant to places people are already visiting. Theresa then mentioned that Marion Ave is a good example of this. Discussion followed on different ideas for adding content to the website and whether it should have its own tab or be blended in with other attractions. It was suggested by Commissioner Deutsch that perhaps starting a list of about 15 things is the best way to begin. Sean also suggested they check out their websites and some of the surrounding county websites for ideas. Clare then asked if there's a printed map or guide of all the markers. Jennifer mentioned that there is an interactive map online. Commissioner Deutsch then suggested that maybe we could print that out and hang it in all the libraries. Clare also suggested having them in the event center and wondering if working with Gordon to add them to the travel maps that are already being produced would be possible. Stephen then said they are trying to work on old gas station style folding maps with the military sites. Sean the said that maps are a popular item for tourists to pick up, 2nd only to visitor guides. Stephen then asked Sean what the county tagline is. Sean replied with "Our best side is Outside" stating that the outdoors is what they market and what the area is all about. Dianne asked if the put local festivals and events on the website, Sean said yes, there is an events page, they try to monitor it for relevant and accurate information.

Theresa then suggested they review and wrap up, so they don't take up too much more of Sean's time. She feels that the meeting has been very helpful and would like to regroup with Sean more frequently, suggesting maybe quarterly if that is ok with him. Then she went on to recap that the group would put together a list of 15 areas/markers for the website and working on putting together information for some maps. Sean added that when the group is ready to discuss the topic further, to let him know, he would probably send out someone from his office.

Dianne asked if anyone had any further questions for Sean. The replies were no, and he left the meeting. At this time, Clare said she would like to revisit updating the applications for historic markers and the ordinance. She asked about the church group that had recently applied and Jennifer said they are still filling out and, in the meantime, they had another applicant. (President of Rotunda) Jennifer then mentioned that there is a current form for the application. Theresa then asked Jennifer how markers in Punta Gorda work, and she said they would have to work with the city on those markers. The city would have to approve them. Theresa then brought up a marker for Marion Ave, and yes, that would have to go through the City of Punta Gorda. It can start here with a form, but then it goes to them.

Jennifer then asked what the group would like to have on the next agenda, it was stated that the ordinance should be on, and Dianne would like the markers to be on the agenda every month. Theresa said she would like to follow up on today's topic as well. Jennifer then let them know she

spoke with the county attorney regarding whether she would need to come to the meeting The changes can be made and sent to her. Copies of the ordinance will be sent to committee members prior to next meeting.

Member Input: None

Public Input: None

Meeting Adjourned: 10:00 a.m.

Next HAC Meeting: - Wednesday, May 11th, 9a.m. at Mid County Regional Library, 2050 Forrest Nelson Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL.

cc:

Commissioner Ken Doherty	Commissioner Joseph Tiseo
Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch	Hector Flores, County Administrator
Commissioner Bill Truex	Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator
Commissioner Christopher Constance	Tommy Scott, Director, Community Svcs Dept.