

Atchafalaya Trace Commission/ Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Minutes: March 13, 2019 Regular Meeting

A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission), managing entity of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA), was held Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at 10 a.m. in the Capitol Park Event Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:

Ascension: Charles Caillouet

E. Baton Rouge: Michael Proctor, Treasurer

St. Martin: Carol Patin

Avoyelles: Wilbert Carmouche, Chair

Lafayette: Wes Davis

Terrebonne: Mart Black, Vice-Chair

Concordia: Linda Gardner

St. Mary: Carrie Stansbury

Commissioners absent:

Assumption: Phillip Daigle, Sr.

Pointe Coupée: J. A. Rummmler

W. Baton Rouge: Angélique Bergeron, Secretary

Iberia: Chris Burton

St. Landry: OPEN

Iberville: Clifford LeGrange

Others present:

Steven Fullen, Executive Director; Justin Owens, Assistant Director; Gerard Overhultz, Laissez Faire, Inc.; Laura Palmer, LASOAR; Jeff Beck LASOAR.

The meeting was called to order at 10:19 a.m. by Chair Wilbert Carmouche, followed by the pledge of allegiance led by Vice-Chair Mart Black.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Mart Black motioned to accept the agenda. **Michael Proctor seconded the motion** and the agenda was **unanimously accepted**.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 9, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

Mart Black motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the January 9, 2019 regular meeting. **Michael Proctor seconded the motion** and the meeting minutes were **unanimously approved**.

ADMINISTRATIVE & BUDGET

The next Commission meeting is May 15, 2019.

1. Steven presented the Director's Report, advising the Commission of the following:
 - a) As reported at the January 9, 2019 meeting, issues with our payment-processing system (including the OnBase database) implemented last year by the Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism's ("CRT") Office of Management and Finance ("OMF") continue to delay payment of completed contracts. OMF now has up to three months to process a request, and they are taking the full three months with all requests.
 - i. Justin has been placed in charge of processing all grant agreement and contract paperwork.
 - ii. These issues continue to delay the design and manufacture of the logo outdoor canopy tents and pop-up banners that Justin spoke about during the November 7, 2018 meeting. Justin was, however, recently made aware of an option to use Trumpet Advertising, one of the agencies with which CRT has an ongoing open contract for these types of design and manufacturing services, which appears to be a means of circumventing the laborious agreement review process that has bogged down many of our other payments.
 - iii. Steven has had numerous meetings with CRT staff, including Assistant Secretary of Tourism Doug Bourgeois, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Tourism Jeff Harlan,

Accounting Administrator Sondra Sloper, and Office of the Lt. Governor Undersecretary Nancy Watkins in an attempt to resolve the issue. These previous meetings have indicated that the issue concerns the new LaGov system, the lack of standardized contracts (which Steven has been addressing since 2018), and OMF's tendency to use all of its allotted three-month approval timeline.

- iv. Another meeting with Doug Bourgeois on this issue is scheduled for this afternoon.
 - v. With the exception of speaker fees, no more applications for assistance in FY 2019 will be accepted until the issues have been satisfactorily resolved.
 - vi. Steven's comments on this continuing issue led to discussion by the Commission. The conclusion was reached that these problems must be internal at CRT and not statewide, as OMF is not using all of its allotted three-month approval timeline with grant agreements and contracts submitted by other state agencies.
- b) To foster a more systematic partner-funding program, applications for FY 2020 programmatic support will be accepted starting July 1, 2019. As a federal partner, ANHA follows the federal fiscal year, meaning requests must be for programs that begin on or after August 1, 2019.
 - c) Steven advised that there are two remaining opportunities to attend Boards and Commissions training. The remaining workshops from 1 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. are scheduled for March 25, and April 29, 2019.
 - d) The ANHA website blog is now active and Cynthia has published two entries so far, with a third submitted by Charles Caillouet to be published soon.
 - e) U.S. House Resolution 1009 now has 73 co-sponsors, which is 13 short of the required minimum. If approved, this bill would supply permanent funding for all National Heritage Areas as part of the overall funding for the National Park Service, although a dollar amount has not yet been specified.
 - f) Commissioners Wilbert Carmouche, Mart Black and Angélique Bergeron will represent ANHA at the upcoming Congres Mondial Acadien in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island that promotes unity between all Acadian communities throughout the world.
 - g) Wilbert Carmouche will represent ANHA next week at the Western Canada Tourism Summit.
 - h) Steven was recently made aware that a discrepancy exists between the National Park Service and CRT regarding the remaining funds in the ANHA budget. A conference call on this matter is scheduled with Sondra Sloper, Jeff Harlan and Elisa Kunz on March 14, 2019.
 - i) Steven will email the schedule for upcoming Committee meetings on March 18, 2019.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

1. Steven updated the Commission on the ongoing revision of the ANHA three-volume educational curriculum. The review of source material and content has been completed and the lesson plans are currently being designed, although the review was temporarily stalled due to delays in completing the process of hiring Cynthia Sanders.
2. Steven met with Baton Rouge Councilwoman Erika Green to discuss local support for ANHA, as well as ANHA support of underserved communities around the state.
3. **SOCIAL MEDIA:**
 - a) The ANHA Facebook page has 4098 current likes (+235 from January), and the page is ranked 13th in likes out of 42 NHAs. This increase is mostly due to organic reach, although a handful of posts enjoyed increased reach via paid promotions.
 - i. Top Recent Post: Water Heritage Trail site at Avery Island Jungle Gardens (reach of 12.2K with 177 likes and 163 shares);
 - b) The ANHA Instagram account (“atchafalaya_nha”) currently has 1058 followers (+17 from January).
 - i. Top Recent Post: Photo of ANHA signage near Houma.
 - c) The ANHA Twitter account (“AtchafalayaNHA”) currently has 514 followers (+11 from January).

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Natural & Outdoor Resources –

- a. Charles Caillouet presented the Basin report, informing the Commission on the dangers of potential flooding within the ANHA due to the extremely high levels of water presently on the Mississippi River. His report was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation containing satellite imagery and graphics detailing water levels and the river control structures operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- b. The Committee recently approved funding to support an upcoming fishing program being sponsored by BREC. The request from TECHE Project for funding to support their interpretive kiosks has been tabled pending receipt of additional information requested by the Committee.

B. History & Culture –

- a. The Committee had a telephone meeting on the subject of the addition of important aspects of ANHA history and culture to the three-volume educational curriculum.

C. Sustainability –

- a. Steven informed the Commission that Rebecca Blankenbaker, CEO of the Cane River National Heritage Area, will address the Commission at the May 15, 2019 meeting about her experiences in transitioning Cane River National Heritage Area from a Commission-based model to its current 501 (c)(3) model.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Wilbert Carmouche recognized the guests at the meeting and asked for any comments they might have. In response, Laura Palmer of LASOAR thanked the Commission for its ongoing assistance of many of LASOAR's programs.
2. Cynthia Sanders was interviewed by a local radio station today, during which she talked about several upcoming events throughout the Heritage Area. As this interview will be a monthly occurrence, Steven asked the Commission to submit any events or projects they would like Cynthia to mention during future interviews.

COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioners announced upcoming events and projects in their parishes:

1. Wes Davis: As this was Wes' first meeting as a Commissioner, he introduced himself to everyone before mentioning the recent Vermilion Watershed District report on flooding issues in Lafayette Parish since the catastrophic flooding in 2016. An abandoned facility formerly occupied by Bell Helicopter has been purchased and reoccupied by a Russian helicopter manufacturer. Many events are scheduled throughout the parish this weekend in celebration of St. Patrick's Day.
2. Charles Caillouet: Currently, there are very little flooding issues in Ascension Parish. Many events are scheduled throughout the parish this weekend in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. The "Bulls, Bands and Barrels" event is also scheduled this weekend at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.
3. Linda Gardner: As this was Linda's first meeting as a Commissioner, she introduced herself to everyone before mentioning the Ferriday Zydeco Festival coming up on March 16, 2019. The Outdoor Channel recently filmed a major-league fishing tournament which took place in Vidalia. An Elvis Presley tribute concert will be held at the Delta Music Museum Arcade on March 23, 2019. She will attend a rural tourism conference this October in Natchez, Mississippi.
4. Mart Black: The Louisiana Run for the Wetlands race, taking place on April 7, 2019 will traverse the Pointe Aux Chene Wetlands. He represented ANHA at several recent BTNEP conferences. A new African American History museum recently opened in Houma.

5. Wilbert Carmouche: Many events are scheduled throughout the parish this weekend in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. A beloved former Avoyelles Commission of Tourism Commissioner, who remained active with the Commission after her retirement, recently passed away at the age of 95. The annual parish-wide crawfish boil is coming up, with thirty teams competing.
6. Carrie Stansbury: Due to poor weather forecasts, the annual Eagle Expo did not enjoy attendance as high as in recent years. She thanked ANHA for its support of the Wings to Soar program. The Beer Bash will take place this weekend along with the St. Patrick's Day parade in Morgan City. A series of songwriter conferences and workshops will begin on March 31, 2019. Other upcoming events around Morgan City include the Cypress Sawmill Festival, the Wooden Boat Festival and the Porch Festival. A documentary on ghosts in St. Mary Parish is being developed by the Travel Channel.
7. Carol Patin: Crawfishermen are struggling to achieve a successful harvest due to the small size of crawfish this season. St. Martin Parish officials and residents are doing all they can to prepare for potential flooding this spring. Breaux Bridge High School won its first State basketball championship in many years.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further announcements or business, Carol Patin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Charles Caillouet seconded the motion and, passing unanimously, the meeting was adjourned.