

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
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METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES JULY 21, 2025

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting at the Midtown Hills Police Precinct, 1441 12th Avenue South, on July 21, 2025, with Chair Linda Wynn presiding.

Attendance

Commissioners: Dr. Clay Bailey, John Bridges, Dr. Don Cusic, Dr. Jane Landers, Dr. Bill McKee, Sandra Parham, Dr. Marisa Richmond, Vice Chair Laura Rost, Tom Wood, and Chair Linda Wynn were **present**. Menié Bell, Dr. Erica Hayden, Jim Hoobler were **not present**.

Staff Members: Tim Walker, Caroline Eller, Dr. Adam Fracchia, Bryan Gilley, Russell LeSturgeon, Scarlett Miles, and Dustin Summers were **present**. Robin Zeigler (Metro Planning, Historic Zoning Commission) was **present**. Hannah Zeitlin (Metro Legal) was **present**. Interns Zach Rutter and Rowan Wheeler were present.

County Historian: Dr. Carole Bucy was **not present**.

Guests: Bonnie Seymour, Registrar and Assistant Curator, The Parthenon

- I. **CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND WELCOME – Chair Linda Wynn**
Chair Linda Wynn called the meeting to order at approximately 12:05 p.m. and verified that a quorum was present after the roll call of attendance.
- II. **REVIEW OF JUNE MEETING MINUTES – Chair Linda Wynn**
[presented out of order after Item IV] Chair Wynn presented last month's meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Bridges moved to accept the June 2025 meeting minutes. Vice Chair Rost seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- III. **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – Chair Linda Wynn**
Chair Wynn opened the floor for Public Comment. No members of the public requested time to address the commission.

IV. “Looted Legacies: Excavating Museum Collections” – *Bonnie Seymour, Registrar and Assistant Curator, The Parthenon*

Bonnie Seymour, Registrar and Assistant Curator at the Parthenon, explained the process she followed to repatriate 255 artifacts from the Parthenon’s Pre-Columbian Collection back to Mexico. The objects were acquired by former Parthenon director Malcolm Parker in the 1960s and 1970s from two donors, Dr. John Montgomery and Edgar York. The collection also included a few loans, with no recorded information, that were considered abandoned property according to Tennessee state law. Recognizing that the artifacts do not belong in the Parthenon’s collection and should be returned to Mexico, Ms. Seymour researched items in the collection, including provenance research, consulted with past and present Parthenon staff as well as the American Alliance of Museums, Tennessee State Museum, the McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture [Knoxville], Metro Parks leadership and Metro Legal, and contacted Mexican Consulates in Albuquerque and Atlanta, to determine the process for returning the objects to Mexico. Presently, the process for removing items from the Parthenon’s collection requires surplusizing the items from the Metro Government, which is inappropriate for museum collections. With the advice and support of Metro Parks and Metro Legal leadership, the Parthenon sought and gained approval from the Metro Parks Board to deaccession the collection instead following the process for surplus. An ordinance from Metro Council also enabled the deaccession and repatriation. Additionally, as part of the process, the Parthenon hosted an exhibit called “Repatriation and Its Impact,” featuring some of the items, with input from the local Latino community, as well as artworks by José Vera González, a Nashville-based artist from the same region as the artifacts. A few items were copied using 3-D models to provide the local Latino community with a continued connection with the artifacts. The exhibit also included recent case studies of repatriation of antiquities from museums in the United States to their countries of origin - some successful, some not. Ms. Seymour shared some of these case studies with the MHC.

Ms. Seymour is now working to change the deaccessioning (and subsequent repatriation, if needed) process for the Parthenon, so that in the future it is more streamlined and follows best practices. The Parthenon does have additional artifacts in its collection that may need to be repatriated in the future. Ms. Seymour is working with Dr. Fracchia on these efforts. Dr. Fracchia has also reached out to other departments to see what’s in their respective collections as part of this ongoing effort.

V. **DIRECTOR’S REPORT**– *Tim Walker*

Director Walker thanked Commissioner Bailey for attending the Rep. John Lewis Way Annual March this past Saturday. The event attracted a great crowd and the weather was perfect.

Please mark your calendar for Nashville Parks Foundation's "Picnic for the Parks" on September 20 in Sevier Park. MHC is one of the event sponsors. The Nashville Historical Foundation will have a table at the event and MHC staff will be offering tours of Sunnyside during the program. Commissioner Bailey has volunteered to assist with tours, and other commissioners are welcome to participate as well.

On Saturday, July 26, Master Gardeners will hold a planting day at Sunnyside. Director Walker and some MHC staff plan to participate along with volunteers from Friends of Sevier Park.

The summer house will be constructed on the last Saturday of September. The goal is to have the construction completed in one day, but it may require two. Once the summer house is complete, we will install another interpretive panel alongside it and update the Nashville Sites tour to reflect the addition of the new structure.

Commissioner Wood asked for an update on the vendor for the café. Director Walker reported that the occupancy permit has been the latest hold-up, but it should be remedied in the next couple of weeks.

VIII. HISTORIC ZONING REPORT – *Robin Zeigler*

Historic Zoning Administrator Zeigler reported that the Historic Zoning Commission recently approved the designation of Peabody Manor, 1901 Capers Avenue, as a local Historic Landmark. Metro Planning Commission will review the case next week and Metro Council the following.

The transition of MHZC staff to the Metro Planning Department continues to go well. They have been focusing on cross training. They've also wrapped up a significant number of outstanding, lingering violations, and are now down to one or two.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

Vice Chair Rost asked why the MHC does not hold its regular monthly meeting at the Midtown Hills police precinct? It is a Metro owned property and parking is much easier than parking at the Fulton Campus for the Sonny West Conference Center. Vice Chair Rost would like to propose moving the location from the Sonny West Conference Center to the Midtown Hills police precinct. Chair Wynn agreed to add to next month's meeting agenda a discussion about changing the location of the MHC's monthly meetings.

X. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Director Walker introduced Hannah Zeitlin from Metro Legal. Ms. Zeitlin is taking over client advice to the MHC from Lora Fox and, previously, Ann Mikkelsen. Ms. Zeitlin previously served as an attorney in the Metro Council office.

XI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner McKee moved to adjourn; Commissioner Landers seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted Monday, August 18, 2025.
Scarlett C. Miles