



METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES MARCH 16, 2026

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting at the Howard Office Building, Sonny West Conference Center, 700 President Ronald Reagan Way, on March 16, 2026, with Chair Linda Wynn presiding.

Attendance

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

Staff Members: Caroline Eller, Dr. Adam Fracchia, Bryan Gilley, Russell LeSturgeon, and Dustin Summers were **present**. Hannah Zeitlin (Metro Legal) was **present**.

County Historian: Dr. Lea Williams was not present.

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND WELCOME – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Linda Wynn called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m. She verified that a quorum was present after the roll call of attendance.

II. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn presented the February 23, 2026, meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Richmond moved to accept the minutes. Commissioner Landers seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn opened the floor for Public Comment. Seeing no members of the public wishing to speak, the Commission moved to the next agenda item.

IV. HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Caroline Eller*

Chair Wynn noted that Jessica Fitzpatrick was on maternity leave. Caroline Eller presented four proposed historical markers for the Commission's consideration.

a. Starday-King Studio

Caroline presented a marker at 3557 Dickerson Pike, funded by the Woodbine Community Organization. Commissioner Wood raised a grammatical concern and suggested reordering sentences for clarity. Commissioner Wood moved to approve with the noted changes. Commissioner Richmond seconded, and the motion passed.

unanimously.

b. Natchez Trace in Warner Park

Caroline presented a double-sided marker to be located in Edwin Warner Park near the Harpeth Woods Trailhead, funded by the Friends of Warner Park. Commissioner Bridges noted a missing comma. Commissioner McKee moved to approve with the changes. Commissioner Bridges seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

c. Gay Street Synagogue

Caroline presented a double-sided marker funded by West End Synagogue, to be located near Rosa Parks and MLK, Jr. Boulevard or Gay Street and Representative John Lewis Way. Commissioner Hoobler moved to approve. Commissioner Richmond seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

d. Natchez Trace (Golf Club Ln.)

Caroline presented a marker at 2339 Golf Club Lane, funded by the Meese family. Commissioner Richmond moved to approve. Commissioner Bridges seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

e. Marker Program/Event Updates

Caroline announced that the Robert Churchwell, Sr. marker dedication ceremony would take place Friday, March 20 at 10:00 a.m. at Robert Churchwell, Sr. Elementary.

V. PRESERVATION AWARDS: HONOR AWARDS NOMINEES – *Dr. Don Cusic*

Russell LeSturgeon introduced the Honor Awards nominees and asked Commissioner Cusic to speak to the committee's selections.

Achievement Award: Zada Law – Zada Law is an archaeologist who has been engaged in archaeology, public history, and preservation in Nashville for many years. She is the Director of the Fullerton Laboratory for Spatial Studies at Middle Tennessee State University and has been a leader in the preservation of Fort Negley and the Nashville City Cemetery through research, archaeology, geophysics, and spatial analysis.

Commissioners' Award: Jefferson Street Historical Society – Founded in 2018 by Monchiere' Holmes-Jones and fellow historic Jefferson Street business leaders, the Jefferson Street Historical Society is a nonprofit organization committed to the economic and cultural revitalization of historic Jefferson Street. The organization works to amplify, preserve, and protect this iconic area known for its vibrant Black-owned businesses and rich cultural history.

Fletch Coke Award: Phil Claiborne – Phil Claiborne founded the Friends of Two Rivers Mansion in 2010, with a mission to protect, preserve, restore, and promote the use of the Mansion and its history. He served two terms on Metro Council and has been a long-time supporter of the MHC.

Commissioner Bridges moved to approve the slate of Honor Awards nominees. Commissioner Hoobler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. BUDGET MEETING/SELECTION COMMITTEE UPDATE – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn noted that Vice Chair Laura Rost was unable to attend the meeting but had provided a report that the budget meeting went very well and that the presentations appeared to be well-received, though she acknowledged the current financial constraints.

Dustin Summers provided additional detail on the FY27 budget request, including two budget modifications: a new Public Information Representative position to assist with the grants program and public outreach, and a staff elevation from Historic Preservationist 1 to Historic Preservationist 2. He also noted 4% requests for historical markers, basement repairs at Sunnyside, ITS equipment, and fleet items including a truck and zero-turn mower for the Nashville City Cemetery.

Bryan Gilley presented the capital expense request of approximately \$8.2 million for the Nashville City Cemetery. The primary expenses include repairs to the 1912 stone wall around the cemetery, iron work repairs and repainting, monument repair, repaving, lighting replacement due to copper wire theft, and updated interpretive markers. Metro Finance has committed to this project in four \$2 million phases, with Phase One funding contingent upon July 4% funding approval.

Chair Wynn reminded Commissioners that the selection committee would meet on Monday, March 23 to discuss applicants for the Executive Director position.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was announced.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Richmond shared that she served as narrator for a Women's HERstory Tour on March 7, sponsored by Soul of America Tours, and would be presenting to the History Club on Tennessee's role in the U.S. space program.

Commissioner Cusic noted upcoming presentations at RCA Studio B covering Elvis on March 24 and Minnie Pearl on April 8.

Commissioner Hoobler reported speaking to the Fort Nashborough DAR chapter and giving a tour at the Nashville City Cemetery for the Inter-Museum Council of Nashville.

Commissioner Phillips mentioned her work as an unofficial Nashville historian for City Cast Nashville, with upcoming episodes on Ben Allen and the Warner brothers, and congratulated Commissioner Cusic on the success of the TN Writers / TN Stories event featuring his book, *Howdy! The Minnie Pearl Story* (co-authored with Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel).

Commissioner Jones noted that the regularly scheduled MHZC meeting would be held Wednesday, March 18, and mentioned that the old Groove Records building in East Nashville had been demolished illegally without a historic preservation permit or codes permit. Discussion of the appropriate MHZC response will be on the agenda.

Commissioner Burke shared that he participated in the enslaved memorial program at the Hermitage the previous month, where he read a poem about Alfred, one of the many notable enslaved persons connected to the property.

Chair Wynn mentioned she had nearly finished an article on Polydore, an enslaved person at the Hermitage also known as Fernando, tracing his story through various battles.

Commissioner Hoobler announced that the Nashville City Cemetery had successfully completed fundraising for a memorial bench that will honor enslaved persons buried on site.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hoobler moved to adjourn. Commissioner McKee seconded. Chair Wynn adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Monday, April 20, 2026.
Russell LeSturgeon