



METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES MAY 18, 2026

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting at the Howard Office Building, Sonny West Conference Center, 700 President Ronald Reagan Way, on May 18, 2026, with Chair Linda Wynn presiding.

Attendance

Commissioners:	Dr. Clay Bailey, John Bridges, Jim Hoobler, Kaitlyn Jones, Dr. Jane Landers, Dr. Bill McKee, Sandra Parham, Betsy Phillips, Vice Chair Laura Rost, and Chair Linda Wynn were present. Gary Burke, Dr. Don Cusic, Dr. Erica Hayden, Dr. Marisa Richmond, and Tom Wood were not present.
Staff Members:	Caroline Eller, Dr. Adam Fracchia, Bryan Gilley, Russell LeStourgeon, Scarlett Miles, and Dustin Summers were present. Hannah Zeitlin (Metro Legal) was present.
County Historian:	Dr. Lea Williams was present.
Guest:	Clare C. Baker, Bellevue Harpeth Historic Association

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. She verified that a quorum was present after the roll call of attendance.

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

Chair Wynn presented the April 20, 2026, meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Bridges moved to accept the minutes. Vice Chair Rost 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. DAVIDSON COUNTY HISTORIAN INTRODUCTION – *Dr. Lea Williams*

Dr. Williams provided an overview of his thoughts and ideas for what he wants to do and what he hopes to accomplish in his new role as Davidson County Historian. He opened with an image of the Tara Cole Memorial Bench. [The bench was placed in Riverfront Park on August 7, 2013, in memory of Tara Cole and the senseless violent acts against

the unhoused in Nashville. In 2019 it was moved—and eventually returned, after advocacy efforts—to make way for the NFL Draft stage. It serves as the site for the annual Homeless Memorial.] Dr. Williams would like to help identify places in Davidson County, like the Tara Cole Memorial Bench, that should be protected and considered by all to be “hands off.” He is recommending the formation of an advisory committee of three residents representing each of the 35 council districts plus three individuals representing the five at-large council members. These historically minded individuals would be recommended by their respective council members and would meet in a certain segment of the county each quarter to identify what places, people, and events deserve attention and/or have been overlooked or missed. For example, one area where he’d like to focus first is the Nolensville Pike corridor.

As an example of his preservation goals, Dr. Williams discussed the loss of Clay Hall at Tennessee State University (TSU). Designed by McKissack and McKissack, the building housed the College of Education and was a monument to Robert E. Clay [1875-1961]. Clay served as a State Rosenwald School Agent and oversaw the establishment of hundreds of Rosenwald schools across the state. Additionally, there are at least seven buildings designed McKissack and McKissack on the TSU campus. As such, TSU is a monument to the architectural firm. All of these buildings are in jeopardy, and Dr. Williams will continue to advocate for buildings like these that embody history relatable to many.

Additionally, Dr. Williams would like to create a children’s book about the “ABCs of Nashville History,” based on a project he started on social media. He is also working on a biography of Avon Williams. Finally, he would like to record oral histories with Nashville’s Vietnam veterans. In closing, he expressed his appreciation for the commission and looks forward to working together.

V. BELLEVUE HARPETH HISTORIC ASSOCIATION -- *Clare C. Baker, Board President*

Ms. Baker provided an overview of the Bellevue Harpeth Historic Association (BHHA), including its efforts to preserve and protect the Belle Vue I log cabin and Old DeMoss Cemetery. The association also hosts speakers, holds outings or “field trips,” and helps to educate the public about Bellevue’s history and historic sites. The BHHA is currently holding a “Walkway into History” campaign to add to and refurbish the brick walkway to the Belle Vue I log cabin in Red Caboose Park through brick sales and donations. The BHHA also hopes to complete much needed repairs to Belle Vue I.

VI. DIRECTOR’S REPORT – *Director Caroline Eller*

Director Eller thanked commissioners for attending Preservation Awards last week, adding special thanks to Vice Chair Rost for her opening remarks and to Commissioners Burke, Hayden and Phillips for their participation in the awards presentation. Director Eller also expressed appreciation to Dr. McKee for coordinating the parking arrangements with Nashville First Baptist Church. She also recognized staff member Bryan Gilley for his assistance as liaison with the Grand Lodge.

Director Eller provided an update on the FY27 budget, highlighting relevant items in the Mayor’s FY27 Budget Proposal. The proposal includes a 2% Metro-wide budget

reduction, which will reduce MHC's FY27 budget by \$21,800. Calculations indicate this is closer to a 1.5% reduction. Director Eller and Dustin Summers are reviewing which budget items this cut may impact, but Dir. Eller assured commissioners that the reduction will result in no staff reduction or Salary & Fringe impacts. None of MHC's FY27 Budget Requests were approved (staffing requests). As mentioned in previous meetings, the department has received 4% funding for historical markers and Sunnyside basement waterproofing as well as partial funding for the purchase of a zero-turn mower for use at Nashville City Cemetery. A Metro-wide soft hiring freeze has been implemented. The only position this may impact is the Seasonal/Temporary position occupied by Claudette Stager. It will not impact the restaffing of MHC's open HP1 position. The budget proposal also includes a 1.7% across-the-board increase (previously called COLA). Most employees (Open Range and MHC Executive Director) will be eligible for an additional 2% merit increase. Employee evaluations will be completed over the next several weeks.

Director Eller also provided updates on the City Cemetery. Bryan Gilley is working with Metro Parks and The Tradesman Group to repair the damaged historic gate at the corner of Oak St. and 4th Ave, which was recently vandalized thus causing the automatic gate to not function properly. Until it is repaired, Bryan is handling manual openings and closures of the gate within work hours as well as on weekends. The repairs will also address issues with the attachment of the hinges to the front pillars, improving functionality of the gate while being historically appropriate.

The memorial bench for NCC's unmarked enslaved burials is set to be unveiled on June 13th at 10:00 a.m. Vanderbilt's VISR team recently completed GPR work to ensure that the bench is being placed appropriately with respect to any possible unmarked graves.

Finally, Chair Wynn, Dr. Lea Williams Jr. and Dir. Eller will be participating in a panel discussion on the history of Jefferson Street this evening at 6:00 p.m. at Pleasant Green Baptist Church (1410 Jefferson Street). This is part of the larger "Past, Present, and Future Panel Discussion" for the Jefferson Street Corridor Study project underway as part of the Choose How You Move initiative.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

No other formal business was announced.

On behalf of the North Nashville Heritage Project and in recognition of her recent retirement from the Tennessee Historical Commission, Dr. Williams presented Chair Linda Wynn with a plaque honoring her many years of service, scholarship, and commitment to keeping the history and memory of Tennessee alive for future generations. After a round of applause, a surprised Chair Wynn thanked Dr. Williams.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Bailey noted the recent recognition of Commissioner McKee by the State of Tennessee for his contributions to Public History.

Commissioner Hoobler noted his lecture "Women in Art" is later this week at Second Presbyterian Church. It is the second lecture in the Nashville Historical Foundation's

Ann Roberts Lecture Series taking place this month. Commissioner Bridges praised last week's "Women on Screen" lecture.

Commissioner Phillips noted that last Tuesday, she, Chair Wynn, and Mayor O'Connell spoke to a group providing Continuing Legal Education on Civil Rights.

Commissioner Parham expressed appreciation to commissioners who attended the dedication of the Dr. Lloyd C. Elam historical marker at Meharry last week. Chair Wynn commended Commissioner Parham for a wonderful event.

Commissioners Landers and Bailey met with Tracy Harris (Fort Negley), Ben Eagles (Friends of Fort Negley), David Fleming (architect), Council Member Zulfat Suara, and others at the Green Building, which is located down the hill from Fort Negley, about the building's potential uses. The building has good bones and has abundant space but will need a lot of work.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McKee moved to adjourn. Commissioner Hoobler seconded. Chair Wynn adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Monday, June 15, 2026.

Scarlett C. Miles