

GWINNETT HISTORICAL RESTORATION & PRESERVATION BOARD

Meeting Minutes**Monday, March 22, 2021 6:00pm**

Virtual Meeting

Members present: Justin Walsh, Ann Bender, Marlene Taylor-Crawford, Demetrios Lambros

Member Absent: Marvin Nash Worthy

Others present: Mark Patterson, Sarah Barlow, Betty Warbington, Beverly Paff, Eli Stancil, Barbara, Amirah Lawson, Cassandra Williams, Curt Thompson, 404-XXX-XX07, Diane Fisher, Zachary Pratt and Toby Lyles, Stephen Babb, Ray Harvin

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Marlene Taylor-Crawford at 6:03pm.

2. Welcome/Opening Remarks

Marlene Taylor-Crawford thanked former Chair Aaron Ragans for his service and stated that there was no District 2 appointee at this time. Sarah Barlow took roll call of Board members, Demetrios Lambros joined later in the meeting.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion made to approve the Agenda

{Action: approved; Motion: Justin Walsh; Second: Ann Bender; Vote: (3-0)Walsh -Yes; Bender-Yes; Taylor-Crawford-Yes}

4. Announcements (Board Members)

Marlene Taylor- Crawford called attention to March being women's history month.

1. Old Business

- a. Soil ceremony discussion and presentation with Gwinnett Remembrance Coalition in collaboration with the Equal Justice Initiative

Ray Harvin presented on the Gwinnett Remembrance Coalition (GRC) and is a co-facilitator with Curtis Clemens. He provided background on the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), created by

Bryan Stevenson, that addresses inequalities and the toxic legacy of racism in the United States:

- Myth of non-whites being less than human is legacy of slavery enduring today
- People not talking about it to each other
- More Americans wanting to understand and have dialogue
- EJI provides teaching and paths forward

Ray Harvin provided the following historical context on lynchings:

- Over 4000 occurred in 12 southern states of U.S. from 1847-1950
- 4-8 of those in Gwinnett County, 1 confirmed on the grounds of the Gwinnett Historic Courthouse (GHC), Charles Hale

He presented the following GRC projects requests:

- Community Soil and Collection Project
- Request and install historical markers where lynchings have occurred

The GRC wants to assist community to know its history and find ways to communicate and move forward together.

He provided the following information on the GRC:

- 50 members, very diverse, multiple committees
- Membership growing, official committee of Gwinnett NAACP
- In contact with sister counties (Fulton and Dekalb) who are further along but providing consultation and assistance
- Forsythe, LaGrange and Walker counties have done work up to and including installing historical markers

He stated the GRC had the following goals for this meeting:

- Educating the community and starting conversations about legacy of slavery and lynchings
- Request a soil collection and ceremony on grounds of GHC in honor and remembrance of Charles Hale
- Later pursue historical marker

He stated there is tremendous interest and support for this and all Gwinnett citizens will be better when the past is recognized and discussed.

Stephen Babb from GRC requested permission to conduct soil collection event on GHC grounds on 2021 Juneteenth celebration, date TBD. He provided the following details of the request:

- Public event the GRC would plan with support of EJI
- Memorialize the lynching of Charles Hale in 1911 at GHC
- In person and virtual component, in person depending on Covid-19 protocols
- Brief account of lynching, invocations from clergy from various faith traditions including African American clergy, reading of proclamation by County Commissioners, music and poetry reading
- Honor memory of Charles Hale, educate Gwinnett residents about county's history of racial violence and generate dialog to promote healing

- Call attention to racial terror lynchings, as laid out by EJI report, aimed at African American populations to maintain white supremacy. Was a reason for great migration of African Americans out of the South.

Stephen Babb discussed an EJI memo recounting the details of the Charles Hale lynching in 1911:

- Local farmer stated wife was assaulted, Sheriff and posse found Charles Hale near Yellow River
- Hale was jailed and after midnight, white mob hung him from telephone pole at Perry and Pike Street intersection
- Hale hung for a day, bystanders took photos with body, created postcards
- Hale was buried in a cemetery near the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center

Stephen Babb explained the soil ceremony would collect several jars of soil, keeping one for display potentially in the Hooper-Renwick museum/library and one jar sent to EJI Center in Alabama.

He stated in the future GRC would like to pursue a historical marker and additional ceremonies and collections. He welcomed the public to share any information they had regarding the Hale family, lynchings in Gwinnett and local history with GRC.

Marlene Taylor-Crawford thanked GRC and asked if the Board had any questions or comments.

Ann Bender stated she was familiar with Fulton County's Roswell Roots event had been very impactful to the community.

Marlene Taylor-Crawford asked GRC what the significance of having the event on Juneteenth way.

Ray Harvin stated that the date that African Americans found out they were free is now celebrated openly and it was important to the entire history of slavery. He added it was important to talk about the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow era beyond emotion.

Marlene Taylor-Crawford asked if there was historical information on Hale's ancestors or if GRC knew where his grave was. Stephen Babb stated they could not find the exact location of the grave.

Demetrios Lambros had no comment.

Justin Walsh had no comment.

Motion made to recommend the Board of Commissioners and the Gwinnett Historical Restoration and Preservation Board work with GRC and EJI for a soil ceremony and collection to be held on June 19th, 2021.

{Action: approved; Motion: Marlene Taylor-Crawford; Second: Ann Bender; Vote: (4-0) Walsh - Yes; Bender-Yes; Lambros-Yes; Taylor-Crawford-Yes}

2. Comments from Audience

Sarah Barlow addressed each audience member and allowed 2 minutes for public comment:

- Amirah Lawson-appreciative of support and attention to this matter.
- Barbara Stankey-very grateful of support, attends Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Gwinnett
- Beverly Paff-President of Gwinnett Historical Society, very open to continuing difficult conversations and support educating public about history regardless of how difficult it is
- Curt Thompson-knew that Charles Hale was survived by a wife and daughter and one other relative according to the Census records at that time. As part of GRC they are researching 2 additional lynchings: Mark McConnel, at Loganville Square and Henry Campbell in Lawrenceville
- Diane Fisher-thanked everyone for their support
- Eli Stancel-would love to see EJI memo, local historian, thankful for making public aware of the memo
- Toby Lyles-in support of effort, working with historical research committee, aware of dates and relatives of Charles Hale
- Zachary Pratt-new President of the United Ebony Society, thanked everyone for work making initiative come to fruition. Needed, serious impact on starting conversations regarding racism, United Ebony Society planning Juneteenth event on June 19th at Rhodes Jordan Park and it would be awesome to collaborate

Mark Patterson asked for clarification for the record if the resolution will be going through the Community Services Department or if the Board will take it directly to the Board of Commissioners. Marlene Taylor-Crawford stated they would be taking it directly to the Board of Commissioners.

Ann Bender requested holding an additional Special Meeting.

Motion made to hold a Special Meeting on April 12, 2021.

{Action: approved; Motion: Ann Bender; Second: Taylor-Crawford; Vote: (4-0) Walsh -Yes; Bender-Yes; Lambros-Yes; Taylor-Crawford-Yes}

Motion made to discuss time of April 12, 2021 meeting.

{Action: approved; Motion: Marlene Taylor-Crawford; Second: Ann Bender; Vote: (4-0) Walsh -Yes; Bender-Yes; Lambros-Yes; Taylor-Crawford-Yes}

Marlene Taylor-Crawford requested input from Demetrios Lambros regarding time. Demetrios Lambros stated before 1pm or lunch hour would be best.

Motion made to hold the Special Meeting on April 12, 2021 at 10am.

{Action: approved; Motion: Marlene Taylor-Crawford; Second: Demetrios Lambros; Vote: (4-0) Walsh -Yes; Bender-Yes; Lambros-Yes; Taylor-Crawford-Yes}

Marlene Taylor-Crawford thanked everyone for their support, stating she was the first African American on the HRPB and the first African American Chair and this was so important. She

encouraged everyone to have difficult conversations. She read the following quote from Maya Angelou:

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again”

3. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:54pm was approved.

{Action: approved; Motion: Ann Bender; Second: Demetrios Lambros; Vote: (4-0) Walsh -Yes; Bender-Yes; Lambros-Yes; Taylor-Crawford-Yes}

Next meeting: Monday April 12, 2021, 10:00am, virtual meeting