

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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November 1, 2016

Re: County Historical Commission (CHC) Appointments

Dear County Judges and Commissioners:

Chapter 318 of the Texas Local Government Code directs county commissioners courts to make CHC appointments in January of odd-numbered years and to provide appointee contact information to the Texas Historical Commission (THC). We encourage you to appoint (and reappoint) individuals who have knowledge and skills of use to your CHC.

Please consider approving appointments for the 2017-2018 term of service by December 31, 2016, so that appointees can begin serving in January 2017.

While reappointing individuals is helpful in providing experience and consistency, please ensure all appointees—new and seasoned—are **willing and able** to serve. Please appoint the number of individuals necessary to facilitate an effective preservation program for your county—statutory minimum is 7 county residents and statewide average is 19 appointees per CHC. Note that quorum is a majority of all appointed individuals, so appointees must be active in order for CHCs to conduct business appropriately.

Appointee criteria are discussed on the attached flyer. In compliance with the CHC statute, **county commissioners court should appoint individuals who:**

- represent all precincts in your county;
- reflect the age range and ethnic diversity of your county; and
- demonstrate an active interest in historic preservation.

Appointing a diverse CHC board enhances the appreciation for, and interest in, preserving all aspects of your county's history. Additionally, we highly recommend courts appoint individuals who have demonstrated consistently an ability to **work respectfully and constructively with other appointees and the public.**

The individual selected to serve as CHC chair must be committed, creative, and competent in order to fulfill leadership duties. Please keep in mind that our agency uses electronic methods of communication, so approving CHC chairs with access to the internet and email is encouraged. Contact our agency with any questions.

Sincerely,



Amy Hammons, CHC Outreach Coordinator, amy.hammons@thc.state.tx.us, 512.475.2692

Attached: CHC Criteria Recommendations, 2015 CHC Annual Report Summary



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

CHC Appointee Criteria Recommendations

Texas Local Government Code (Chapter 318) enables the county commissioners court to appoint a County Historical Commission (CHC) for the purpose of initiating and conducting programs for the preservation of the county's historic cultural resources. CHCs are meant to be productive—to this end, appointees must be willing **and** able to serve.

CHC Appointment Season

Statute is found online at www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.318.htm. Note Sec. 318.003 below.

(a) The commission must be composed of at least seven residents of the county. Members of the commission must be individuals who broadly reflect the age, ethnic, and geographic diversity of the county.

(b) The members of the commission shall be appointed during the month of January of odd-numbered years and are appointed for a term of two years

(c) Each commission member must have an interest in historic preservation and an understanding of local history and resources.

(d) The commissioners court shall provide to the Texas Historical Commission a list of appointed members and the mailing address of each member.



Judge Paul Lovier (currently retired) presents Franklin CHC appointees a Distinguished Service Award.

Appointment Methodology

Exact methodology for appointing CHCs may vary somewhat from county to county—some courts interview individuals seeking the appointment and others consider appointee recommendations from the CHC. Whatever the method, county officials should consider the following criteria prior to appointment. Applying our recommended criteria help ensure that appointees are active, work well with others, and leave a positive impression with the public.

Recommended Appointee Criteria

- Has an interest in historic preservation and a working knowledge of local history.
- Able and willing to volunteer time to plan and manage projects, programs, and events—must participate over and beyond attending commission meetings.
- Able and willing to attend preservation education opportunities outside of his/her county.
- Able to provide site visits to historic properties around the county to update surveys/property inventories and provide current information on site conditions for THC staff.
- Able to receive/respond to public inquiries about county historic resources in a timely manner.
- If at all possible, appointees should have access to the Internet and be able to send/receive email messages.



CHC Appointee Expectations

CHCs rely on the county commissioners court—a CHCs ruling body—to articulate expectations for the appointed role. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) provides preservation expertise and recommendations for preservation-related matters. THC also provides recommendations for organizational excellence; however, CHCs depend on county officials to set the tone and expectations for service.

Consider the following exhortations that county commissioners court should state at the onset of an individual's appointment, preferably when these individuals take an oath of office.

- Appointees must respect this professional appointment and can/will represent county government appropriately.
- If appointee does not maintain respectful behavior, appointee will be removed from CHC.
- Appointees must be a positive influence for preservation in the county and throughout the state.
- Appointees must be willing to work and partner with people and organizations in constructive ways.
- Appointees must promote a diverse interpretation of all county historic and cultural resources—this appointment should not be viewed as a time to prioritize personal/family-related interests.
- Appointees must ensure information collected today will be accessible in the future—the research and archiving that takes place as a CHC appointee is for the benefit of the public at large and should be accessible to all.
- CHC must provide ongoing updates—written and at court—on CHC activity to county commissioners court.

How County Officials Support CHCs

The time and energy provided by your CHC contributes to the vitality of your county. Please consider the following ways to support your CHC, and by extension, your county.

- Direct county auditor to discuss county policies with CHC to ensure business is conducted legally and ethically.
- Read CHC meeting minutes and attend CHC meetings when possible.
- Schedule regular meetings with your CHC chair to discuss ongoing business.
- Provide office and meeting space for your CHC appointees.
- Consider funding preservation education opportunities even when events are located outside the county—you have made the appointments, appointees are donating their service, and appointees need training for their role.
- Provide internet access to CHC appointees at the county courthouse to conduct CHC business and access THC web site and other preservation tools.
- Consider increasing budgeted financial support if appointees are providing substantial services from year to year, especially if amount has not been increased in recent years.
- Thank appointees during commissioners court—a little praise goes a long way, particularly when provided in public.



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

2015 CHC Annual Report Summary

Reporting statistics for the 2015 year of service

- The Texas Historical Commission (THC) received reports from 180 County Historical Commissions (CHC).
- CHCs reported combined total of **482,205** volunteer hours.
 - **482,205** hours / 2,080 hours (*40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year*) = work of **231** full-time employees
 - **482,205** hours × \$23.56 (*IRS volunteer rate**) = **\$ 11,360,749**

Texas CHCs contributed volunteer services that have a value of more than \$11 million.

- 180 of reporting CHCs provided financial information for the 2015 year of service.
- 68% of reporting CHCs noted an annual county allocation; 67% receive in-kind services from the county.

Select budget line items amounts reported by CHCs (<i>out of 180 reporting CHCs</i>)	Average allocation	Reporting Totals
Annual county allocation for 2015 (not including money for museums):	\$ 4,931	\$ 887,613
County money allotted to CHC budgets for museums (44 CHCs affected):	\$ 26,797	\$ 1,179,077
Any other money issued by the county during 2015:		\$ 65,786
Total county monies invested in CHCs in 2015		\$ 2,132,476
Value of CHC volunteer services in 2015		\$ 11,360,749

For every \$1 counties invest in CHCs, more than \$5 worth of service is returned by CHCs.

CHCs supplemented the **\$2,132,476** million in county monies with **\$917,103** from grants, donations, and fundraisers used to support history- and preservation-related projects for counties.

General information about CHCs in Texas

- The average size of reporting CHCs is 19 appointees.
- CHCs usually hold monthly or bimonthly full commission meetings; they may also have committee meetings.
- CHCs provide an average of 2,400–2,700 volunteer hours per year; reports show zero hours upwards to 10,000 hours.
- CHCs participate in a wide range of activities but some activities are more popular than others; see below.

Most popular activities among reporting CHCs for 2015 (<i>out of 180 reporting CHCs</i>)	# of participating CHCs
Maintain an inventory of subject markers in the county	146
Review marker applications	137
Periodically assess the condition of subject markers in the county	135
Provide educational events/ information on historic preservation/local history to the public	134
Volunteer with local museums	134
Promoted historic and cultural sites to develop and sustain heritage tourism initiatives	127
Maintain an inventory of cemeteries in the county	126

* Calculations used estimated volunteer hourly rate for 2015 as per independentsector.org.

Reporting data as of 6/1/16