



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

real places telling real stories



Distinguished Service Awards

Distinguished Service Award (DSA)

The DSA exists to recognize county historical commissions (CHCs) that participate in a wide spectrum of projects and accomplishments. THC staff evaluate CHC annual reports submitted in January and February and then provide comments and recommendations for DSA recognition based on each county's achievements in historic preservation activities.





Distinguished Service Award Criteria

DSAs are given annually based on activity during a calendar year, so it is possible that a CHC would receive a DSA in one year but not in the previous or following year. However, CHCs that provide a consistent and dedicated level of service may receive a DSA year after year.

Please read through the *DSA Criteria Reference Sheet* and have it in hand when viewing the following presentation that provides background on DSA criteria. It is not necessary that you memorize all aspects of the criteria; as in previous years, answers to the CHC Annual Report questions will provide all necessary information to determine DSA eligibility.





DSA Criteria – CHC Statutes Set Standards

Texas' Local Government Code (Chapter 318) establishes the purpose of a CHC. These statutes have been cited over the years in CHC handbooks. For this reason the statutes are used to determine the work for which CHCs are evaluated. This presentation will take you through the statutes and comment on recommended CHC activity that lends itself to DSA eligibility.

As always special attention is paid to organizational structure since this the basis for sustainable preservation efforts. Other areas of evaluation include membership, training and preservation projects. Again, we suggest having the ***DSA Criteria Reference Sheet*** in hand as you go through this presentation with your CHC.





DSA Criteria – How Criteria Will Be Presented

Left side of the table shows:

CHC Statutes, referenced from Chapter 318 of the Local Government Code

Sec. # is referenced.

SECTION TITLE is included.

Statutory wording is pasted below title.

Actual statutes can always be found on the internet at the following address: XXXXX

Right side of the table shows:

- *Bulleted items list the work in which a CHC should be involved and report to be eligible for a DSA*

Non-bulleted comments (placed below the red line) provide recommendations for CHCs; comments will provide clarification or indicate work that may contribute to the larger challenge of creating a sustainable CHC.

** Immediately following criteria listing will be images submitted by 2008 DSA winners along with information from annual reports that illustrate participation in DSA criteria activity.



CHC Organization – Reporting Requirements

Sec. 318.008.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

(a) In order to inform the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission of the commission's needs and programs, the commission shall make an annual report of its activities and recommendations to the commissioners court and to the Texas Historical Commission before the end of each calendar year. The commission may make as many other reports and recommendations as it sees fit.

(b) The commission shall make recommendations to the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission concerning the acquisition and designation of property, real or personal, that is of historical or archeological significance.

- *Turn in an CHC Annual Report*
- *Make an annual report of activities to county commissioners court*
- *Submit CHC meeting minutes,*

AND/OR

Submit proposed CHC budget for commissioners court recommendations,

AND/OR

Meet with the County Judge AND with County Commissioners

We recommend including your county commissioners as well as your judge in your meetings and events.



- Palo Pinto CHC has a good working relationship with county officials (left, top)
- Van Zandt CHC appointed a liaison to work with county officials on proper preservation practices (below)
- Washington CHC has a county commissioner on the CHC who is their advocate (left, bottom)





CHC Organization – Funding and In-kind Services

Sec. 318.009.

FISCAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES.

(a) The commissioners court may pay the necessary expenses of the commission.

(b) The commissioners court may make agreements with governmental agencies or private organizations and may appropriate funds from the general fund of the county for

the purpose of:

- (1) erecting historical markers and monuments;
- (2) purchasing objects and collections of objects that are historically significant to the county;
- (3) preparing, publishing, and disseminating, by sale or otherwise, a history of the county;
- (4) hiring professional staff and consultants;
- (5) providing matching funds for grants; and
- (6) funding other programs or activities as suggested by the THC and the commissioners court.

- *Secure money (annual CHC budget)*

AND/OR

In-kind services from county

In-kind services include but are not limited to:

- *paying postage for CHC mail-outs*
- *using county office computers*
- *using county office supplies*
- *providing space for CHC meetings*

Even if a county “has no money” it can provide minimal assistance to enable CHCs to carry out required business.



- Austin County pays for CHC mailings and copies, along with storage space for historic papers, books, CHC records (left, top)
- Jones County provides an annual monetary allocation to the CHC (left, bottom)
- Jefferson County pays for a CHC coordinator to assist appointees in their work (below)





CHC Organization – Planning and Partnering

Sec. 318.0101.

PLANNING.

The commission should work in partnership with other preservation entities in the county to prepare a plan for the preservation of the county's historic and cultural resources. The commission should use the Texas Historical Commission's statewide preservation plan for guidance.

- *Provide a CHC work plan used by your CHC (outline or list of prioritize work)*

AND/OR

Use THC's work plan templates developed for CHC planning

- *Partner with at least 3 different organizations in your county or region*

CHC Outreach has developed 3 different work plan templates: basic, intermediate and advanced. Complying with this DSA requirement is as simple as turning in your existing work plan or filling out 1 of the 3 templates.

- Bell CHC prioritizes work featured in their work plan based on need and urgency
- Lavaca CHC updates their work plan each year (right)
- Victoria CHC asks that each committee have a work plan, timeline and budget (below, right)



Bell County Historical Commission

Commission members,
all appointed by the Bell County Commissioners Court,
are dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Bell County history.

Meetings are at 7 p.m.
on the fourth Monday of each month (except December)
in the first floor courtroom of the Courthouse.
Meetings are open to the public.

Office is located in the
Bell County Courthouse, Belton, Texas, Room 305.

Office is staffed by members and volunteers
9 a.m. - noon Monday through Friday





- Cochran CHC works with 4-H groups and Boy Scouts (top)
- Kerr CHC partners with Schreiner University to care for county archives and artifacts (below)
- Knox CHC partners with local schools (bottom, left)
- Henderson planned a heritage festival with other local organizations





CHC Membership – Appointee Selection and Listing

Sec. 318.003. COMPOSITION; TERM.

(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...shall be appointed during the month of January of odd-numbered years and are appointed for a term of two years. The commissioners court shall fill a vacancy...for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(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 THC a list of appointed members and the mailing address of each member.

- *Appoint at least 7 county residents*
- *Provide updated appointment list in odd-numbered years*

Although appointee selection depends heavily upon finding individuals willing to serve, we do not require membership to reflect demographics of county; however, we do expect counties to strive toward diversity, and these efforts are recognized in the DSA evaluation.

We recommend (but do not require) that you discuss appointees' individual interests and assign related responsibilities when possible.



- **Brown CHC shares duties during meetings and assigns tasks with deadlines; members may initiate projects such as developing museum exhibits or writing historical marker applications (left)**
- **Galveston CHC engages appointees by using their expertise, which increases their strength and effectiveness as an organization; chair is proactive in networking with appointees to learn more about their skills and makes sure that positive feedback is provided to encourage appointees (right)**

- Bee CHC appointees reflect the diversity of their county; they also make a concerted effort to pursue projects that promote the diversity of their history (below)
- Erath CHC appointees reflect a broad age range
- Williamson CHC also reflects a broad age range and each county precinct is represented (top)





CHC Membership – Open Meetings

Sec. 318.005. MEETINGS.

(a) The commission shall meet at least four times each year and may meet as often as the commission may determine under rules adopted by it for its own regulation.

(b) All meetings of the commission shall be conducted in accordance with the open meetings law, Chapter 551, Government Code.

Free Open Meetings training is available at anytime online at: http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/og_training.shtml

As noted in January 2009 letter to CHC Chairs, if you do not have internet access, just notify CHC Outreach and we will send you a CD with the online training segments.

- *Report dates of at least 4 meetings in 2009*
- *State that at least one appointee has taken Open Meetings training*

Although statutes mention 4 meetings year, most CHCs find that extra meetings for committees are necessary in order to accomplish their work.

Please consider setting regular meeting dates and times to give your appointees more than sufficient notice to schedule these meetings into their professional and personal calendars.

- **Brewster CHC** understands that they are an arm of county government; appointees take Open Meetings training and keep their certificates on file at the county courthouse (left)
- **Tom Green CHC** has over 20 appointees, many of whom do not own a computer; they provided open meetings training during a monthly meeting and burned training CDs for those who had computers at home





CHC Membership – Volunteer Hours

The statutes do not address the degree to which each appointee should make themselves available for CHC work. However, the amount of volunteer hours does indicate a certain level of CHC activity.

CHC annual reports and DSA distribution were evaluated to determine an average number of volunteer hours to expect from CHCs; this average appears to be easily achieved by previous DSA winners.

- *Keep track of and report volunteer hours in CHC annual report.*
- *Total hours should reflect an average of at least 1 hour of service a week per appointee, which amounts to about 50 hours per appointee per year.*

Formula used to determine if volunteer hours meet DSA eligibility average:

Small county has 7 appointees.

Minimal hours to report for DSA eligibility: $7 \times \underline{50 \text{ hours}} = 350 \text{ hours}$

Large county has 50 appointees.

Minimal hours to report for DSA eligibility: $50 \times \underline{50 \text{ hours}} = 2,500 \text{ hours}$



Volunteer Hours – Additional Information

CHC Volunteer Hours

Please consider flexibility of the formula created to evaluate the appropriate number of CHC volunteer hours for DSA eligibility:

- Each CHC total is evaluated individually with respect to its number of appointees. This approach was taken because a CHC with a large number of appointees will typically report more hours than a CHC with a small number of appointees.
- The formula uses a CHC's total volunteer hours rather than requiring amounts for each appointee. This approach was taken because the amount of volunteer hours per appointee will vary (i.e., some appointees put in more or less time than others); CHCs that are interested in regulating hours per appointee can address this issue in their bylaws.
- Although the average applies hours per week, it does not require that an appointee work each week or each month; by using a yearly total, this method respects that individuals may have other commitments that impact their availability to serve from time to time.

FORMULA: # of appointees x 50 hours/year = minimal # hours for DSA eligibility

- **Franklin CHC** reported 20 appointees (*20 appointees x 50 hours/year = 1,000 hours*)
1,000 hours is the minimum # of hours for DSA eligibility for Franklin CHC
Franklin CHC reported 3,700 volunteer hours for 2008
3,700 is well over their minimum requirement of 1,000 hours
Franklin CHC has fulfilled the volunteer hours required for DSA eligibility



- **Tarrant CHC** reported 31 appointees (*31 appointees x 50 hours/year = 1,550 hours*)
1,550 hours is the minimum # of hours for DSA eligibility for Tarrant CHC
Tarrant CHC reported 5,085 volunteer hours for 2008
5,085 is well over their minimum requirement of 1,550 hours
Tarrant CHC has fulfilled the volunteer hours required for DSA eligibility



CHC Education – CHC Appointee Training

Sec. 318.0102.

LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING.

(a) The Texas Historical Commission shall make orientation materials and training available to all county historical commissions.

(b) The commission should strive to be represented at informational or educational meetings sponsored by the Texas Historical Commission at least twice each year.

(c) The commission, with assistance from the Texas Historical Commission, shall carry out board and volunteer training.

- *CHC representation for at least 2 preservation education opportunities (THC or local speakers/ events)*
- *Utilize THC web site presentations and/ or provide training opportunities for your CHC*

The intent is for CHCs to demonstrate they are actively seeking preservation education opportunities. If only one appointee is able to attend a training, hopefully that appointee will share new information with their CHC. The ultimate goal is for CHC appointees to seek preservation education whenever possible.

**We recommend that if feasible, CHCs attend THC's Annual Historic Preservation Conference which offers 2-3 days of preservation training; sending one delegate would cover the required 2 opportunities noted above.



- Atascosa CHC seeks out educational opportunities, often leaving their county to attend preservation training

- Uvalde CHC actively participates in training opportunities (middle)



- Many CHCs send delegates to attend THC's Annual Historic Preservation Conference, which provides 2 days of substantial sessions from THC staff and other preservation specialists

THC's annual conference also provides an opportunity to meet preservationists from across the state to share ideas and successes





CHC Education – Countywide Awareness

Sec. 318.007.

EDUCATION.

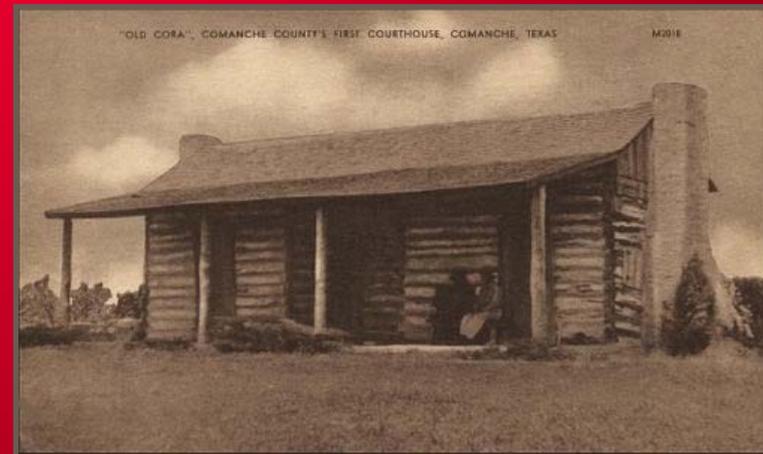
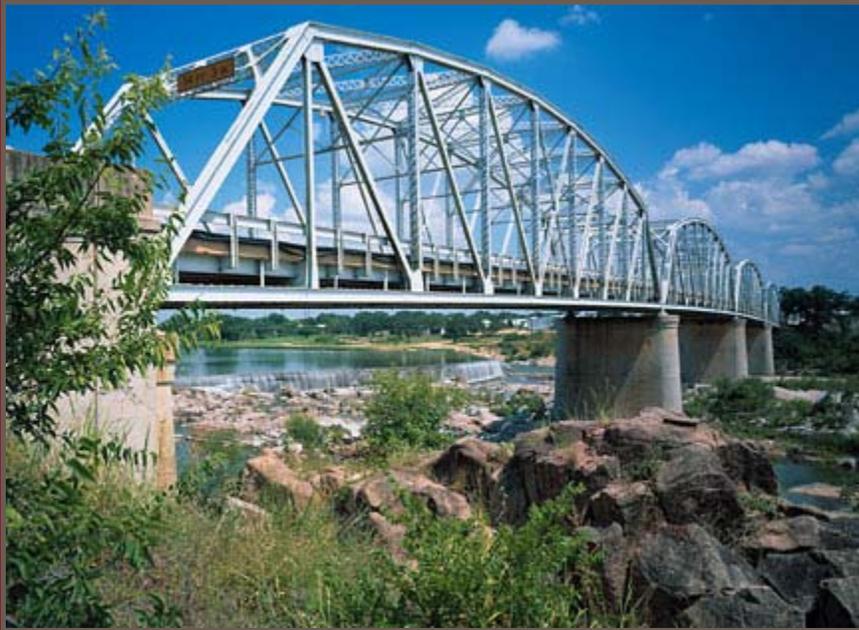
The commission should strive to create countywide awareness and appreciation of historic preservation and its benefits and uses.

- *Provide or partner in a project or effort to educate the community about history and/ or preservation topics*

Our hope is for each county to garner countywide support for preserving the real places and real stories of Texas. It is not just about recounting historical happenings but the challenge of connecting communities to those people and places while promoting preservation tools that will enrich communities and protect historic resources.



- Cameron continually sponsors and supports community preservation education events (left, top)
- Comanche CHC published a county history book in 2008 (below)
- Llano CHC provides history talks at three county libraries and teaches county history to 6th grade Texas history students



- Goliad CHC uses the THC web site to access information on historic resources and preservation programs; they also host speakers on a variety of topics, one of which helped CHC to develop a pool of tour guides (top, left)
- Webb CHC regularly hosts preservation speakers at their commission meetings; 2008 topics included information on historic districts and the need for a stronger preservation ordinances to protect endangered properties



Many CHCs partner with area schools, libraries, colleges and universities to find speakers for their appointees. These speakers not only inspire your appointees but are a great way to promote history in your county. CHCs that take stewardship seriously seek instruction from preservation professionals that can provide presentations on best practices and standards of care.





CHC Core Preservation – CHC Projects (Slide 1 of 3)

Sec. 318.006. RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION.

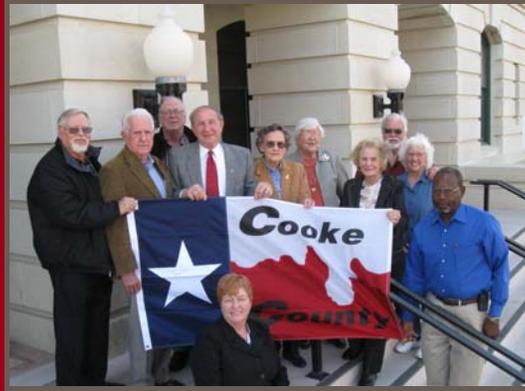
- (a) The commission should institute and carry out a continuing survey of the county....
- (b) The commission should develop and maintain its inventory of surveyed individual properties and districts....
- (c) The commission should establish a system for the periodic review...(designated properties)

Sec. 318.010. RESOURCE INTERPRETATION.

- (a) The commission shall review applications for Official Texas Historical Markers....
- (b) The commission should establish a system for the periodic review...(historical markers)
- (c) The commission should work to promote historic and cultural sites in the county to develop and sustain heritage tourism.

- *Report at least 3 projects that reflect any of the statutory assignments noted on Slides 1-3.*

Core Preservation work goes to the heart of identifying, interpreting and protecting historic resources. Most CHCs are involved in far more than 3 projects that reflect these ideas; for this reason the annual report will request that you choose the 3 most impactful preservation projects performed during the 2009 body of work.



- **Cooke CHC keeps track of endangered properties in the county and passes this information on the THC**

- **Kaufman CHC keeps inventories on historic resources in their county; these inventories list physical conditions and are updated on a continual basis (middle)**

- **Kinney CHC inventories county historic resources and conducts an annual "Review and Assessment" of RTHL properties for historic tax exemption consideration (top, right)**

- **Orange CHC maintains inventories of historic properties; these inventories were invaluable when assessing the amount of storm damage to historic properties**



- The CHCs in Brazos County (top, left), Hill County (top, right), Randall County (bottom, left) and Taylor County actively participate in THC's Historical Marker Program with a cooperative attitude that positively promotes preservation





CHC Core Preservation – CHC Projects (Slide 2 of 3)

Sec. 318.010. RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION.

(e) In operating museums, the commission shall adhere to professional standards in the care, collection, management, and interpretation of artifacts.

Sec. 318.012. HISTORIC SITE TAX EXEMPTION.

(a) The commissioners court may establish a program under which the commission:

(1) receives and reviews applications....

(2) recommends to the commissioners court whether to grant the exemption....

(b) The commission may examine the property... and recommend...whether the exemption should be withdrawn....

**Please read entire Section for complete language.

- *Report at least 3 projects that reflect any of the statutory assignments noted on Slides 1-3.*

This slide notes work that requires a bit more attention to preservation standards and procedure. But as you can imagine, the impact of this type of work contributes to the protection of historic resources.

- Denton CHC's Museum Committee oversees the Denton County Museums, which consist of the Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum, the Bayless House Museum and the Denton County African American Museum. The Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum has an outreach program for schools in Denton County. (left)



- Wolf Creek Heritage Museum's mission is to preserve the history of Lipscomb County. The CHC acts as the governing board. The museum provides periodic presentations that educate and entertain their community; this is one of many ways the museum works to interact with the public and promotes county history. (right)



- Collin County gives tax abatements to properties with state, county or city historical markers. CCHC sends out applications to eligible parties, reviews them, does a drive-by inspection and then makes recommendations to the commissioners court. (top, right)





CHC Core Preservation – CHC Projects (Slide 3 of 3)

Sec. 318.002.

ESTABLISHMENT.

The commissioners court of a county may appoint a county historical commission for the purpose of initiating and conducting programs suggested by the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of the county's historic cultural resources.

- *Report at least 3 projects that reflect any of the statutory assignments noted on Slides 1-3.*

Below is a list of programs and projects recommended by the THC.

- Certified Local Government Program (CLG) for the county
 - Visionaries in Preservation Program (VIP) for the county
 - Host a THC workshop in your county
 - Coordinate a regional preservation or tourism event
 - Meet regionally with other CHCs to share experiences and efforts
 - Projects initiated to diversify membership and/or interpretation of historic resources
- ****Special consideration is given to CHCs that go above and beyond DSA Criteria and/or perform service in extraordinary situations (i.e., disaster response, participation in statewide initiatives, etc.)

- Lubbock CHC participates in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program and secures CLG funds for survey work; they also work with Texas Tech University students to survey the county. (city cemetery at left)
- Matagorda CHC has an active county CLG program; they recommend ordinances to city councils for consideration and approval. (middle)
- Milam CHC participates in the CLG program; they have professional historic resource surveys for most of their county and keep track of properties with historic designations. (Rockdale Depot, below)
- Travis CHC participates in the CLG program and works to survey portions of the county that are under severe development pressures that endanger historic resources. (not shown)





- El Paso CHC partners locally and regionally to promote historic sites and encourage heritage tourism for their diverse historic resources (above)
- Hockley CHC hosts annual historic ranch tours in theirs and neighboring counties to promote history and the enduring livelihood of these Texas places (top, right)
- Shackelford CHC partners to support and participate in the Fort Griffin Fandangle – Texas' Oldest Outdoor Musical





- **Burleson CHC partners to provide a Texas Archeology Month event. (top, left)**
- **Chambers CHC sponsors a history essay contest to promote history in area schools. (top, right)**
- **Houston CHC and Walker CHC regularly communicate with other and other CHCs to share ideas and accomplishments. (middle, respectively)**
- **Fayette CHC supported the designation of the entire town of Fayetteville as a historic district. (bottom)**
- **Rusk CHC raised \$90,000 for the cotton gin restoration. (not shown)**



Distinguished Service Awards

We hope that this presentation has provided you with a better understanding of the work required to earn a Distinguished Service Award. Contact the CHC Outreach Program if you have questions about the award process or THC preservation programs.

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Congratulations to previous DSA winners!
CHCs save the real places that tell the real stories of Texas.

