

State of Texas

County of Brazoria

City of Freeport

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Historical Commission and Main Street Advisory of Freeport, Texas met on Thursday, September 18, 2025 at 5:00 PM at the Freeport Freeport City Hall located at 1201 North Avenue H, Freeport Texas for the purpose of considering the following agenda items:

Board Members: Irene Ocañas
Sandra Leavey
Betty Lopez
Melanie Oldham
Vacant
James Wood

Staff:	Maria Lopez	Main Street Coordinator
	Wade Dillon	Museum Director
	Robert Johnson	Economic Development Director
	Dan Pennington	Interim City Manager
	Chris Duncan	Interim City Attorney

Visitors: Michelle Backman
Flora Green

CALL TO ORDER:

Call to Order

Chairperson Ocañas called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM. She noted that five members were present, which constitutes a quorum.

Invocation/Pledge

Betty Lopez led the invocation.

Robert Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments - (This is an opportunity for citizens and visitors to address the Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board on any agenda or non-agenda item. Individuals must register in advance and adhere to a (2) two-minute time limit.)

There were no citizens signed up for the public comments.

PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Staff Announcements

Museum Update

Wade provided an update on the museum's activities. He shared information about upcoming events for October through December, noting that the museum is expected to surpass 8,000 visitors this year. He reported that the museum expansion raised over \$10,000 in donations. The museum hosted 22 events, 4 special exhibits, and participated in over 12 outreach events during the year. Wade mentioned that the

Christmas event had to be rescheduled from November 22nd to November 29th due to Santa's schedule. Board members discussed potentially holding their meetings at the museum in the future. Wade confirmed that there would be sufficient seating for everyone and suggested setting up tables in a square configuration, as they had done previously when meetings were held in the exhibit hall.

Main Street Update

Maria Lopez provided an update on Main Street activities, beginning with a review of the recent Kid Fest event. She reported that they distributed 320 T-shirts to community members and city employees. The event demonstrated that "Main Street is back" and ready to move forward with planning and future projects.

Maria discussed improvements for next year's Kid Fest, including audience participation with prizes, inviting more nonprofit organizations, planning contests for both parents and children, organizing kids' performances by school organizations, bringing in a magician, recruiting food trucks, and reaching out to neighboring cities to invite them to the event. Board members suggested adding street banners on Dixie Drive, sending information through the school district's communication channels, and placing promotional materials at local businesses.

Maria also shared that she will be attending the Texas Downtown Conference in Waco from November 2-5 and the Crockett Roundtable on October 10th. She mentioned an upcoming roundtable in Galveston on October 14th called "Bringing Back Main Street Roundtable 10th Anniversary" and invited board members to join her.

Maria reported that she registered Main Street to participate in the Fright Night event at the Rec Center on October 23rd, which will be a trunk-or-treat event. She explained that this participation would help raise awareness about the Main Street program in the community.

Chair Comments

Chair Ocañas commented on the success of Kid Fest, thanking Wade and Maria for their efforts. She noted that the event demonstrated what teamwork can accomplish when everyone comes together for the good of the community. She praised the social media content created for the event, describing it as professional-looking.

Chair Ocañas mentioned that board training was on the agenda for future planning, noting that they had asked Ana to potentially facilitate it. The training might be held on a Saturday morning and could include working on transformation strategies as part of their UTSA plan.

BUSINESS-REGULAR SESSION

Consideration and possible action to approve the August 21st, 2025 meeting minutes.

Chair Ocañas asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes from the August 21st meeting; Sandra noted they were very detailed, and upon her motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by James, the motion passed unanimously.

Update on the Q3 Texas Main Street Program Quarterly Report.

Maria Lopez reported that the Q3 Main Street Program Quarterly Report is due on October 10th. She has been working with Robert and Wade to gather the necessary information, as they were involved in the Main Street program before she joined in August. Robert mentioned that he had provided training to Maria on tracking reinvestment totals and that they would use information from the EDC about downtown grants that had been awarded. Maria noted that she had been collecting information from committee chairs about volunteer hours and meetings. She also mentioned that the annual report for Main Street America will be due in January. During this discussion, board members expressed surprise at the total investments made in downtown, which, according to the previous year's report, included \$143,000 invested by Freeport EDC and \$572,000 invested by Freeport EDC in business. Robert explained that these figures included not only EDC grants but also matching

funds and additional investments made by business owners, mentioning businesses such as Sweet Teas, the gas station, Social Food Mart, and Turbieville Construction.

Consideration and possible action to fill Main Street Board vacancy.

The board reviewed applications from two candidates to fill the vacancy, Michelle Backman and Flora Green, both of whom were present.

Betty Lopez made a motion to recommend Flora Green to fill the position, noting Ms. Green's retirement status, property ownership, and demonstrated interest in the board's work and downtown promotion, then it was seconded by Melanie Oldham.

During the discussion, Chair Irene Ocañas read a statement from Vice Chair Edith Fischer, who was absent, in support of Michelle Backman, citing her long-term business ownership, property ownership, and active involvement in Main Street events.

Both candidates addressed the board: Ms. Green discussed owning two Freeport properties, including a renovated 1900s home, and her goal to improve and restore downtown; Ms. Backman shared her 60-year residency, business ownership since 2012, and desire to contribute to downtown revitalization.

Chair Irene Ocañas called the motion to a vote, with all present voting 2 "ayes" and 2 "nays." Sandra Leavey abstained from the vote.

James Wood then made a motion that both candidates should be presented to the city council for consideration, seconded by Sandra Leavey.

Chair Irene Ocañas called the motion to a vote, with all present voting 3 "ayes" and 2 "nays." The motion passed.

Update on Alleyway Project.

Robert provided an update on the Park Avenue Alley project. He reported that CenterPoint had received the application and a new map that he created after the initial miscommunication led contractors down the road rather than the alley. They are waiting for CenterPoint to schedule a meeting with Robert, Dan, and Rudy at the site to discuss lowering gas lines. Melanie Oldham asked if funding would come from EDC, the city, and TIRZ to complete the project. Robert confirmed that funding for the project would come from EDC, the city, or TIRZ money once they receive an estimate.

Discuss upcoming event in November.

Maria presented plans for a "Main Street Grateful Gathering" in November. This would be a networking event held at a new business called Downtown Events located in a portion of what used to be the Arcadia building. The event would not be open to the public but would include organizations, the board, and city employees. Maria described it as a semi-formal event designed to build relationships, celebrate Main Street's accomplishments for the year, and educate other organizations about the Main Street program. She presented a draft timeline for the event: social hour with live music and icebreakers from 6:30-7:30 PM, followed by appetizers, welcomes and introductions, presentations about Main Street, and door prizes. The tentative date is November 13th, though she noted she still needed to book the venue and review the budget.

Board members discussed inviting building owners, church leaders, and other influential community members. Maria said she would check if they could serve wine at the event and would look into the budget and potential sponsorships for funding the event.

Discuss upcoming event in December.

Maria shared plans for a Christmas tree lighting ceremony on December 6th in downtown Freeport. She reported that she had met with a vendor that day who would install and decorate a 30-foot Christmas tree. She

chose the date after checking other cities' schedules to avoid conflicts, though she noted there is an event in Angleton the same day.

Maria has reached out to four schools including Freeport High School, Freeport Intermediate, and Brazosport College, hoping to secure performances from at least one school. She also invited the drill team.

The event will include the tree lighting ceremony with city officials, performances, a holiday market with vendors selling handmade items, food trucks, a mailbox for children's letters to Santa, hot chocolate, photo opportunities with a backdrop, and a DJ. Maria mentioned that she has already secured commitments from the DJ, a photo booth, and a backdrop provider. She emphasized that sponsorships would be crucial for decorations and other elements due to budget constraints.

Chair Ocañas noted that Maria would be working with the Organization and Promotion committees to plan the details for both November and December events, and that they would create task lists for board members to sign up and help.

WORK SESSION:

Design Committee Chair Betty Lopez announcements and comments

Betty reported that the Design Committee met on the 22nd and focused on the need for more education as part of the committee's job, particularly regarding water activities and ecotourism. She mentioned that fundraising would be necessary and that the committee discussed organizing walking tours to share the history of downtown Freeport, including its buildings, former businesses, and historical features. Betty volunteered to lead this effort and discussed working with Maria to potentially incorporate a walking tour into the November event.

Organization & Promotion Chair Edith Fischer announcements and comments

Maria reported on behalf of the Promotion and Organization committees, noting that they discussed the details of the November and December events as she had presented earlier. She explained that they would break down the event planning into tasks and assign them to committee members.

Economic Vitality Committee Chair Irene Ocañas announcements and comments

Chair Ocañas reported that the Economic Vitality Committee did not meet. She mentioned that she had reached out to federal regulators at the OCC regarding a program they are trying to develop, noting that it could be a fair lending issue that requires permission from each bank's regulators. She said she would follow up with her regulator and that other banks would work with theirs as well.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION- NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Future Discussion Items for Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board

ADJOURNMENT:

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Betty Lopez to adjourn, seconded by Sandra Leavey, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:11 PM.



Maria Lopez, Main Street Coordinator
City of Freeport, TX