



Minutes

Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board

March 19, 2026

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, March 19, 2026 at 6:00 PM at the Freeport The Nat Hickey Education Center located at 311 E Park Ave, Freeport Texas for the purpose of considering the following agenda items:

The following attendees were present

Board Members: Irene Ocañas
Edith Fischer
Sandra Leavey
Betty Lopez
Flora Green
Michelle Backman
Lon Siddall
James Wood

Staff: Maria Lopez - Main Street Coordinator
Robert Johnson-Economic Development Director
Loretta Cady- Interim Museum Director
Dr. Danielle Kelly-City Manager

Visitors: No visitors were present.

CALL TO ORDER:

Call to Order

Chairperson Irene Ocañas called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM on Thursday, March 19, 2026.

Invocation/Pledge

Irene Ocañas led the invocation, and 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 (4) two-minute time limit.)

There were no public comments.

PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Staff Announcements

Museum Update

Loretta provided an update on museum activities. She met with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday to discuss county-wide funding for Dia de los Muertos, offering Freeport Main Street to host the procession downtown and the museum to display panels and ofrendas during October. They are also considering a kickoff event at River Place in early October.

The museum had good attendance for Dinosaur George and is preparing for busy summer events including a sharks exhibit opening in May, Fort Velasco Day on June 13th, a Juneteenth celebration on June 20th, and a Texas 250 celebration for July 4th featuring a special panel display about Texas' role during the 250th anniversary.

Main Street Update

Maria Lopez reported that board applications are due April 1st for members whose terms are ending: Flora, Jeff, Irene, James, and Sandra. Applications were made available for those interested in reapplying, with the city council making the final appointments.

Board training is planned for June, facilitated by a Main Street America consultant. The quarterly reports are due April 10th, and subcommittee hours must be submitted by the same date. The April board meeting will be moved to April 23rd due to staff availability.

Chair Comments/Announcements

There were no chair comments or announcements.

BUSINESS-REGULAR SESSION:

Consideration and possible action to approve the February 19, 2026, meeting minutes.

The board reviewed the February meeting minutes. Sandra noted a correction needed on page three, where "director Larry Blanchard" should read "director Larry Fansher" (F-a-n-s-h-e-r). Melanie was also noted as a visitor who should be added to the record.

A motion to approve the February 19, 2026 meeting minutes was made by Sandra Leavey and seconded by Lon Siddall, with all present voting "Aye", the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action on next steps for the Historic Downtown Flagpole Restoration project, including potential fundraising efforts.

Maria presented cost estimates from interim public works director John Perez for the flagpole restoration project. The estimates included: a GLG lift at \$800 per week (anticipated to need only one week), flower beds estimated at \$300 depending on design and flower selection, paint and supplies to be provided by public works, and spotlights ranging from \$50-300 depending on selection.

Board members raised questions about the electrical infrastructure, with concerns that the original electrical work may not have been properly documented or installed to current standards. There was discussion about whether the flagpole qualifies as historic, with Robert noting that while the state doesn't recognize it as historic (it's not 100 years old), it could potentially be designated through local ordinance.

Irene emphasized the importance of using appropriate restoration techniques if the flagpole is to be treated as historic, including protecting any original patina and using gentle, non-acidic cleaning methods. The board discussed the flagpole's significance as part of Freeport's hurricane warning system.

The board agreed that Maria and Loretta would research the flagpole's historic status, contact the state about potential certification, and determine what prerequisites exist for historic recognition. They will also investigate whether the flagpole can be certified through state, county, or local processes before proceeding with restoration plans.

Discussion of priority locations for downtown beautification projects, including potential fundraising efforts.

Maria sought board input on downtown beautification projects to improve visual appeal, create sense of place, encourage visitation, and support local businesses. She noted that Main Street currently has no budget line item for beautification projects.

James pointed out that the parking area might be the safest location for beautification due to potential infrastructure improvements elsewhere that could interfere with projects along sidewalks. Board members suggested several priorities including installing the purchased benches, updating the fountain's stark white appearance, addressing uneven sidewalks, and improving drainage issues at one end of the park.

Loretta noted several maintenance needs including damaged concrete around benches, missing shingles on the pump house, peeling paint on street lamps, and a plywood-covered concrete structure. The board discussed the historical significance of certain elements like the fountain base and round concrete planters that need to remain unchanged according to the UTSA study.

The board decided that members would email Maria individual lists of beautification priorities, which she would compile and bring back to the board for selection of specific projects to pursue.

Discussion of potential Main Street budget priorities for FY2026–2027.

Dr. Kelly presented information about the city's new priority-based budgeting process for fiscal year 2026-2027. She distributed QR codes for a community survey that closes April 10th, with results to be presented to council on April 20th. The survey focuses on six city priorities, with Main Street's work touching on economic development/tourism and infrastructure/utilities.

Maria outlined potential Main Street budget requests including a facade grant program, community Christmas tree funding, downtown beautification projects, downtown events (currently funded at \$40,000), and streetscape projects as outlined in the comprehensive study.

Board members discussed consolidating Christmas events currently held at multiple city locations to maximize impact and reduce duplication of city resources. There was interest in coordinating with other departments to potentially combine events like the tree lighting with breakfast with Santa and other holiday activities.

Discussion of a catalytic streetscape or infrastructure project identified in the Comprehensive Downtown Plan.

Maria proposed identifying one streetscape project from the comprehensive downtown plan for potential inclusion in the upcoming fiscal year budget. She suggested brick pavers at intersections of West Broad, East Park, and West Park as crosswalks, with Dr. Kelly suggesting these could be sponsored bricks that people could purchase.

James raised concerns about ensuring any street improvements wouldn't be disrupted by future infrastructure projects, emphasizing the need to coordinate with public works. Edith noted concerns about underground utilities, particularly fiber optic lines that weren't properly documented when installed.

Board members discussed alternative projects like improved signage, noting that the EDC is currently working on a comprehensive signage and branding project with consultant Clark and Condon. Robert mentioned that wayfinding has been identified as a need for years but keeps getting delayed.

The board agreed to focus on identifying two manageable projects for this year that could beautify downtown and attract visitors, with funding coming from various sources including city budget, EDC contributions, and industry partnerships.

Discussion of progress of the Freeport Main Street 2026 Transformation Strategy Work Plan.

The board acknowledged ongoing work on the transformation strategy with no specific updates provided at this time.

James presented his work on the downtown Texas website property inventory project. He has been developing content for the "Why Freeport?" section of the downtowntx.org site, which serves as a marketing tool for potential investors. The site will showcase Freeport's 130 identified properties along with

economic incentives and development opportunities.

James shared a draft description emphasizing Freeport's economic potential, low property prices, available incentives, and proximity to the port and beaches. He noted the need for an attractive downtown photo for the site, acknowledging current downtown conditions make this challenging.

Robert provided feedback on grant program details that needed correction, particularly regarding CDBG funding eligibility. The board agreed that Maria would email James' draft to members for review and input before finalizing the content.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Economic Vitality Subcommittee Update

Robert reported that the subcommittee met twice in March with Finance Director Ashlee and Staff Accountant Lily to discuss establishing a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This would allow Main Street to solicit donations that qualify as charitable tax deductions, making the organization more appealing to industry sponsors who have been reluctant to donate due to political climate concerns.

The process would require attorney preparation of documents, various filings, and could utilize the city's accounting system with a dedicated general ledger. Chris, the city attorney, could potentially prepare the necessary documents.

The subcommittee also reviewed a \$50,000 T-Mobile grant opportunity that could fund smaller beautification projects. They are waiting for the city's grant writer contract to be finalized before proceeding with applications.

The group discussed a potential project to extend the decorative brick planters from 288 down Second Street to downtown, creating a cohesive pathway design. This could coordinate with the upcoming Second Street repaving project by the county.

Promotion Subcommittee Update

Edith reported preparations for Saturday's Move & Groove event, with participants able to either walk or stay at the museum to greet visitors. Dole is donating bananas and pineapples for participants, and Culligan is providing water. Participants were encouraged to wear yellow or white. Marie Abercrombie will lead the exercise portion, and Betty will provide storytelling.

Organization Subcommittee Update

James reported progress on the property inventory database and volunteer management system through See My Legacy. They are working to embed liability release forms into the volunteer signup process to streamline the registration procedure. A continuous fundraiser has been established to help maintain the volunteer database and keep people engaged with the organization.

Design Subcommittee Update

Betty reported that the Design Subcommittee did not meet due to her recent anniversary trip. She noted visiting many thriving downtown programs during the trip and plans to schedule a meeting for the following week.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING/UPCOMING EVENTS:

The next Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2026.

The next board meeting will be held April 23, 2026 (moved from the usual third Thursday due to scheduling conflicts).

Move & Groove Downtown (3.21.26, Freeport Historic Downtown)

Upcoming events include Move & Groove Downtown on March 21, 2026,

Reimagining Main Street: Preservation & Occupancy Workshop (4.18.26, 311. E Park Ave)

Reimagining Main Street: Preservation & Occupancy Workshop on April 18, 2026, featuring speakers Robert, Reggie, and realtor Tammie Bell.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion to adjourn was made by Edith Fischer, seconded by Lon Siddall, with all present voting "Aye"; the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 PM.

Maria Lopez

Maria Lopez, Main Street Coordinator
City of Freeport, Texas