

THE CITY OF



FREEPORT

200 West Second St • Freeport, TX 77541

979.233.3526 • Fax 979.233.8867

FREEPORT HISTORICAL COMMISSION & MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2024 AT 5:00PM
FREEPORT CITY HALL, 3RD FLOOR TRAINING ROOM
200 W. SECOND STREET, FREEPORT, TX 77541**

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF BRAZORIA

CITY OF FREEPORT

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board met on Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 5:00 PM at Freeport City Hall, 3rd Floor Training Room, 200 W. Second Street, Freeport, Texas for the purpose of considering the following agenda items:

Chairperson:

Margaret McMahan

Board Members:

Keith Stumbaugh
Ronnie Martin
William Leitch
Betty Lopez
Jack Bullman
Edith Fischer
Melanie Oldham

Vice Chairperson:

Irene Ocañas

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Margaret McMahan called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. The following attendees were present:

Board Members

Margaret McMahan
Ronnie Martin
Betty Lopez
Melanie Oldham
Edith Fischer
William Leitch

Staff Members

Ana Silbas, Main Street Coordinator
Wade Dillon, Museum Manager
Robert Johnson, Freeport EDC Executive Director
Jerry Cain, City Council Liaison

Guests: David McGinty, Jordan Strother

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Pledge of Allegiance was led Ronnie Martin and Invocation was led Margaret McMahan.

Chair Margaret McMahan asked guests in attendance to introduce themselves to the board.

David McGinty, Former Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board member introduced himself. McGinty stated he is a current Freeport Economic Development Corporation Board Member and he is attendance to wait for the next spot to open to get back on the Freeport Historical Commission and Main Street Advisory Board.

Jerry Cain, City Council Liaison introduced himself and stated he is here to help out with whatever he can.

Jordan Strother, VP First State Bank introduced himself to the board. Strother stated he is a local resident who has lived in the area for most of his life and is looking to be a prospective member.

Margaret McMahan reviewed meeting protocol, rules of decorum and provided an introduction.

PRESENTATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS: Announcements by Board Members and/or Staff.

Main Street Update (Silbas)

Main Street Coordinator Ana Silbas provided an overview of Freeport Main Street's 2024 January Impact, which included: attending the Freeport Historical Museum Grand Reopening and VIP Event and the Brining Back Main Street Roundtable hosted by the Houston-Galveston Area Council and the City of Angleton, Texas. Silbas stated she did have board members attend the Brining Back Main Street Roundtable, which included: Edith Fischer, Betty Lopez and Melanie Oldham. Additionally, Robert Johnson, Executive Director of Freeport Economic Development Corporation was in attendance.

Silbas gave a brief overview of the January reporting season for the annual accreditation process.

Additionally, Silbas shared that she was able to attend a Design Workshop in Cuero, Texas alongside Main Street Managers from the South Texas region to receive more information related to design assistance and utilizing the free design services from the Texas Main Street Program. Silbas provided a recap of the adopted Transformation Strategies for the Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board, which included: Foundation Building and Business Activation and Development to guide downtown revitalization.

Silbas gave an overview of upcoming events, which included: Share the Love Community Resource Fair (February 24) from 9AM-2PM in Historic Downtown. Freeport Main Street partnered with United Way of Brazoria County and Star of Hope to host the event. Silbas stated there were currently more than 20 community organization who have agreed to participate and connect residents to resources. The BISD Book Bus and CHN Mobile Unit are also set to be a part of this event. Silbas reminded the board that the NexTrex Community Recycling Challenge is still ongoing with the collection of soft plastics until October 2024. Silbas stated she helped Ronnie Martin package 98.5 lbs. of plastic and delivered to Kroger.

Silbas announced a Joint TIRZ, EDC and Main Street meeting set for February 27, 2024 held at Freeport City Hall- 3rd Floor Training Room. Silbas stated the meeting is set to be a walking tour of downtown in partnership with the TIRZ Board, which is governed by the EDC with two additional representatives from Brazosport College and the County. Silbas stated the meeting will begin at 5pm and for board members to plan for a two-hour meeting. Robert Johnson, Executive Director of Freeport Economic Development Corporation is coordinating with Lance

Petty, City Manager to obtain golf carts for this meeting. Silbas stated the goal of the meeting is to identify areas of improvement within the TIRZ District to be able to utilize TIRZ funding.

Lastly, Silbas announced the next H-GAC Bringing Back Main Street Roundtable scheduled for April 23rd with a tentative location: Columbus, Texas.

Museum Update- Recent Exhibits/Events (Dillon)

Museum Manager Wade Dillon introduced himself to the board and guests in attendance. Dillon stated that "...this worst of evils" Slavery in Brazoria County Exhibit will run until the end of March. Additionally, Dillon stated the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee is sponsoring museum admissions for the entire month of February with a cap of \$1,000 dollars. Dillon also mentioned this was the second year the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee has sponsored admissions, which they would like to continue to support the museum.

Dillon stated he is working on events for the entire year. He also shared that the Freeport Historical Museum now has a website: freeportmuseum.com

Regarding museum improvements, Dillion stated he is going to be pursuing sponsorships and donors to improve the exhibit hall space. Also, he stated that he discovered a leak in roof and is looking to address it. Dillon stated things are going good.

Board Member Announcements

Ronnie Martin reminded the board about the soft plastic collection. He asked board members to bring soft plastics to the meeting and he will put it in his car to deliver. Martin gave an overview of acceptable items for the plastic collection

Betty Lopez reiterated acceptable plastic items for collection. Lopez stated she would like to thank the Freeport Police Department and Freeport Fire & EMS for their quick response—she located leaks in their alley during the last rain storm. She stated it was not bad enough to shut down the area, but it did warrant a call to Center Point. Lopez stated she would like to thank Center Point as well for coming out to take care of it the following week.

William Leitch stated that after the repairs of the gas leaks in the alley—they dug up three great big holes again. He stated if it gets any worse, you will need a four-wheel drive to get through the alley. Leitch stated he has noticed contractors who have put down paint for gas line locations all around the downtown area. He would like to know if they are coming to dig to replace gas lines. Betty Lopez added that she noticed excessive markings throughout downtown. Leitch stated he has noticed the markings outside of downtown to Velasco and would like to be made aware if infrastructure updates are going to taking place.

Melanie Oldham stated she is really excited to be appointed to the Historical Main Street Board. She stated she is a retired physical therapist and is now Director of Better Brazoria- a new non-profit that works on improving quality of life in Southern Brazoria County, including Freeport.

Oldham mentioned her very first committee appointment was to Urban Renewal and she got to know Mr. Hickey very well. Oldham stated before he passed away, he gave her 8 folders of downtown building photos. Also, she stated one year ago she took pictures of downtown buildings and it was interesting to see the changes in the buildings.

Main Street America Video-Main Streets in Action

Main Street Coordinator Ana Silbas played an educational Main Street America video for the board to showcase the power of Main Street communities coming together to revive local economies and preserve historical characteristics for generations to come.

BUSINESS-REGULAR SESSION

Consideration and possible action to approve meeting minutes from January 18, 2024.

On a motion made by Ronnie Martin, seconded by Betty Lopez, with all present voting “Aye”, the Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board **unanimously approved** the meeting minutes from January 18, 2024 with the necessary corrections of listed board members.

Consideration and possible action to approve Freeport Main Street Subcommittee applications.

Main Street Coordinator Ana Silbas stated she received one subcommittee application from Jordan Strother. Silbas stated Strother’s application indicated a preference to be on the Economic Vitality Subcommittee. Silbas read submitted application regarding Jordan Strother’s qualifications-Commercial Lender for 10 years, Undergraduate Degree in Economic and Graduate Degree in Entrepreneurship. Additionally, Silbas gave Jordan Strother the opportunity to address the board.

Jordan Strother stated his background is in small business development. He stated he has witnessed what happened when you give people an opportunity to grow. Also, Strother stated that with the proper leadership in place, we can bring back Freeport. He emphasized that we have the water and the history behind us—therefore, there should be no reason Freeport cannot be what it use to be.

On a motion made by Betty Lopez, seconded by William Leitch, with all present voting “Aye”, the Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board **unanimously approved** the subcommittee application for Jordan Strother with placement on the Economic Vitality Subcommittee.

Discussion of Community Visioning Session with UTSA’s Center for Urban and Regional Planning Research.

Main Street Coordinator Ana Silbas provided each board member with the draft Community Visioning Session flyer. Silbas stated that Freeport Main Street is working with UTSA’s Center for Urban and Regional Planning Research to develop a downtown comprehensive plan as we well as design guidelines for the downtown district.

Silbas stated that Freeport Main Street is in the planning process of hosting the first Community Visioning Session. She mentioned that she has been meeting with Robert Johnson and Dr. Ian Caine, Project Principal to discuss the logistics around the Community Visioning Session.

Silbas stated the Community Visioning Session is currently proposed for March 26th at Freeport RiverPlace. Also, Silbas provided an overview of the Community Visioning Session, which will include: an introduction, exercises/dialogue and summary/next steps for a two-hour meeting.

Silbas asked the board for additional community stakeholders. The board members suggested reaching out to pastors, industry leaders, chamber of commerce groups and Small Business Development Center. Silbas stated she has spoken to Robert Johnson about having the Freeport Economic Development Corporation sponsor light refreshments. Robert Johnson, Executive Director of Freeport Economic Development Corporation stated he would recommend having The Alliance listed as a community stakeholder. He believes this project is a very worthy endeavor. Main Street Coordinator Ana Silbas stated she is excited to have the board meet Ian Caine, as he has really made the effort to get to know our community from the start. Also, Robert Johnson, Executive Director of Freeport Economic Development Corporation stated that Ian Caine was introduced to the Texas Main Street Architect team in Austin to make sure they are in the loop and the project is not being conducted without their knowledge.

WORK SESSION

Design Subcommittee Chair Margaret McMahan stated UTSA has taken over leadership of our design guidelines and as the subcommittee is needed will be included in all project initiatives.

Economic Vitality Subcommittee Chair Irene Ocañas was not in attendance but did send notice that the Economic Vitality Subcommittee will be meeting on February 28th at 9AM-Texas Gulf Bank.

Upcoming Events

Ana Silbas, Main Street Coordinator gave an overview of upcoming events for the Freeport Main Street Program-Share the Love Community Resource Fair and Wade Dillon, Museum Manager gave an update on the Slavery Exhibit and stated admission would be free for the Share the Love Community Resource Fair. Silbas reiterated that the Community Visioning Session is set for March 26th.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION-NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory meeting is scheduled for March 21, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Betty Lopez, seconded by Ronnie Martin, with all present voting "Aye", the Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board Chair Margaret McMahan adjourned the meeting at 5:41 pm.



Ronnie Martin, Secretary
Freeport Historical Commission & Main Street Advisory Board



Ana Silbas, Main Street Coordinator
City of Freeport, Texas