

MINUTES OF THE STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, October 28, 2020
Conference Call
10:00 a.m.

Attending: Sarah Koonts, Sharon Davis, Drew Reisinger, Erin Lawrimore, Katherine Calhoun Cutshall, Monika Rhue, Karen Feeney, Lynn Chesson Gilliard, Jim Martin, Adrienne Berney, and Christine Botta

Call to Order

I. Welcome

Sarah Koonts called the SHRAB meeting to order and welcomed members. Sarah reminded everyone of the meeting attachments and invited questions.

II. SHRAB Business Review of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the minutes from the March 3, 2020 meeting. Monika moved their approval as written, Drew seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

III. Report of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and Report of the Division of Archives and Records, Sarah Koonts

Sarah gave brief reports on the department overall and Archives and Records. NCDCCR has been preoccupied by the pandemic and modifying operations with cleaning and distancing changes recommended by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Attractions were completely shut down for a while, but some have opened, like the museums, zoo, aquariums, and other attractions. To ensure fiscal responsibility during a period when admission and other fees were not collected, the Department has been carefully managing spending. Positions are not being filled unless necessary for immediate operations, temporary positions were reduced or suspended, and only critical spending is being allowed. We have received, through the departmental support groups, some CARES Act funds to cover revenue shortfalls over this fiscal year. Many support groups funds activities such as programming and positions at departmental locations. This money will be used to off-set short-falls in these places.

While the public services spaces for the State Archives and State Library have not reopened yet, a request to reopen with limited hours and reduced capacity has been submitted. We hope to reopen November 12 with added safety and health precautions.

Drew asked whether events such as the Transportation Museum's Polar Express had to be canceled. Sarah confirmed and noted that cancellations of such regular large revenue-generating events have compounded the financial difficulties of those DNCR attractions that rely on ticket sales. Many departmental entities have already spent major portions of their reserves to keep staff employed throughout the shutdown and now face a tight budget outlook.

Sarah introduced Adrienne to the group and discussed the merger of history outreach programs, such as the Federation of N.C. Historical Societies and the Cultural Resources Emergency Support Team, into the Division of Archives and Records.

Sarah highlighted some recent activities of the State Archives, including:

- Contributions to the department's "LearnNC" landing page for online resources, including new behind-the-scenes tours with Sarah.
- Video conferencing has enabled the records analysis staff to move all training online, to increase the frequency of trainings, and to expand their reach to more counties. Staff are also planning an oral history program with state and local leaders to capture the history of pandemic response in state and local government offices.
- Digital services staff have concentrated on putting more materials online. Part of that effort is a crowd-sourced transcription platform that links transcribed data to digital images of documents. One new collection in the transcription site is colonial court records. This is part of another NHPRC grant to increase access to these records through full processing, production of new finding aids online, and crowdsourced transcriptions of selected colonial court records.

Discussion followed about the transcription platform and ways to generate interest in the project.

V. Old business, Sarah Koonts

Grant report: "Sharing Communities History Online," report attached.

Progress includes:

- Production of scripts and shot lists for eight tutorial videos
- Several staff members are working with NCDCCR's marketing department to film necessary segments for the videos. These will be professionally narrated.
- Our committee has drafted an application to select five or more organizations for onsite training; staff members are working to post this as an online survey in November with a deadline of January 15.
- A review of applications will take place soon after. Dr. Martin agreed to be on the review committee to select the five organizations we can serve through the grant.
- The schedule for spring onsite consultations depends on COVID, and we may do more virtually, depending on the needs and circumstances of each selected organization. We may visit with a smaller team or one person for multiple days. We are trying to be flexible, and can ask for an extension from NHPRC, given health risks involved and current recommendations from DHHS.

Discussion followed of community archiving approach for this grant project. Erin suggested the possibility of connecting archivists in our network regionally with community archives that are not selected.

VI. New business

NHPRC funding: Sarah gave an update on status of federal funding for humanities granting programs. The House passed 10 of 12 funding bills, but the Senate has not, so a continuing resolution will maintain federal spending at current levels through December 11. The House spending bills had modest increases for the humanities granting programs, but we will have to see where Congress goes after the continuing resolution expires.

All federal grantors need regular reauthorization. Prior to the pandemic, we had hoped that Senator Sullivan of Alaska would introduce a bill to reauthorize NHPRC. Additionally, conversations were had with Senator Carper's office (Delaware) about co-sponsoring. The pandemic interrupted the progress on that legislation. Hopefully, this can be done in the next Congress.

Strategic Planning: NHPRC contracted a year ago with LYRISIS to survey a variety of archives to gather information on organizational needs across the country. The report gives a good overview of the needs, concern of buildings, space issues. It also demonstrated a high need for and interest in collaboration. N.C. already benefits from its large collaborative Digital NC project through the Digital Heritage Center. The survey results can our board develop future strategies. Part of the current grant includes a strategic planning process. The board needs to get this scheduled in the next six to 9 months, but it may have to be virtual. In the past it was done at a retreat center and face-to-face.

African American Resources: Sarah mentioned that she has been in conversation with the Executive Director of the N.C. African American Heritage Commission, Angela Thorpe, as well as the State Library and Chaitra Powell of UNC's Wilson Library to discuss the development of a project to survey cultural repositories of all types about their holdings documenting African American history and culture. Data from a survey could be used to support the development of resources for these repositories as they carry out their missions to preserve these collections. It may also help the SHRAB identify areas of need as we write future grant applications. A better understanding of the locations of existing collections will also help our research staff members better serve patrons who are seeking these kinds of materials. The goal is to create a working group and advisory board to steer the project, with an anticipated date for a survey in the summer of 2021. Sarah will certainly keep the board posted on the project development. Katherine discussed a similar kind of project already underway in the western region, particularly in Buncombe County. She suggested Sarah contact Gene Hyde at UNC Asheville for more information on what they are calling "Archives for Equity. Monika discussed another project in the works with HBCU Library Alliance and funded by the Council on Library

and Independent Research (CLIR). She will follow up with Sarah as more details on the regional/national project are announced.

VII. Adjournment

Discussion of public services for the registers of deeds was discussed. Those offices have remained open for filings, with some research services currently restricted during the pandemic.

With no other business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 11 am.