NORTH LITTLE ROCK HISTORY COMMISSION

506 Main Street
North Little Rock, AR 72114
(501) 371-0755

MINUTES

North Little Rock History Commission
September 9, 2025

Commission Members Present:
Suzanne Jackson, Chairman
Kristal Clark
Ann Clements
Deeana Montgomery
Sonny Rhodes
Belinda Sykes-Burney

Others Present:
Kelli Peters, Staff
Cary Bradburn, Historian

Commission Members Absent:
Robert Coates

History Commission Chairman Suzanne Jackson called the September 9, 2025 meeting of the North Little Rock History Commission to order at 5:30 P.M. and quorum was established.

Chairman Jackson asked Commissioners if they had read the minutes of the April 8, 2025 meeting. Ann Clements moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Kristal Clark seconded the motion and it was approved by all in a voice vote.

Staff Report

Kelli Peters read a list of the donations received since the April 8, 2025 meeting:

1. Numerous items from David Wood's career, school days, and Wood family artifacts. Donated by Debra Wood.
2. Ten (10) Urban Renewal scrapbooks compiled by Olen Thomas during his tenure as a city councilman, spanning 1961-1979. Donated by Glen Thomas.
3. "Days of the Ladies Club Meeting" progam presented by the Pike Avenue Civic Club Auxiliary, November 6, 1953. Donated by Nancy Elliott Smith.
4. St. Patrick's Church pamphlet/program for the last week of November, c. 1957. Donated by Charles Engelberger.
5. Postcard of St. Dionysius Catholic Church in Albaxen, Germany. Donated by Charles Engelberger.
6. Several Machin family heirlooms and portraits. Donated by James Machin Stanley, Jr.
7. Pat Davis' collection of genealogy records which includes books, binders, and notes. Donated by Bruce & Cindy Davis.

8. Photograph of the Lakewood House, taken when it was newly-built. Donated by Deeana Montgomery.
9. Framed vintage postcard of the natural beach umbrella in Lakewood Park, constructed by Dionicio Rodriguez. Donated by Deeana Montgomery.
10. Four (4) North Little Rock High School yearbooks which belonged to James M. Dowell, Jr. (1930, 1931, 1932, & 1933). Donated by Tony & Janie Kendall.
11. Several items salvaged by a firefighter from the ruins of St. Joseph's Orphanage. Donated by Brandon Ussery, NLRFD.

Cary Bradburn added one more item that Ms. Peters had overlooked:

12. Collection of 160 digital photographs of St. Joseph's Orphanage taken in 2010 and 2011. Donated by Jerry Colburn.

Cary Bradburn reported that we are still working on the exhibit. He did a presentation at the Laman Library last month about the history of the railroads in North Little Rock, which was well-attended. Chairman Jackson suggested that we need to start recording these presentations, to which all agreed.

Ms. Peters was reminded about some recent graffiti that was discovered on the outside of our building. Someone recently wrote their "likes" in blue chalk, probably for a senior picture. It was reported to us by two ladies from the North Little Rock Tourism office on Thursday, September 4. Chairman Jackson bought some supplies, then she and Ms. Peters cleaned it off the building. Ms. Peters reported that she had taken two photos of it and reported it to the police.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Jackson reminded the Commissioners that Kristal Clark had recently lost her mother, and that the loss has been hard on Ms. Clark. The commissioners all extended their condolences to Ms. Clark. Ms. Clark appreciated their comments.

Chairman Jackson reported that, in Sandra Taylor Smith's absence, Kelli Peters and Cary Bradburn are doing a great job, there have been no glitches, and the History Commission appreciates everything that they are doing. Ms. Peters and Mr. Bradburn were very grateful for the comments.

Deeana Montgomery reported on the volunteer form, and referred everyone to the copies she had given them. The subject of volunteers for the exhibit was discussed. It was decided that the front desk should be used as a "springboard," as a way to get to know the volunteers better, to help determine what their strengths and weaknesses are, and whether or not they would be suited for other duties in the office or the archives. Chairman Jackson suggested that we check with churches, schools, and other organizations about how they handle volunteers. We could advertise through social media, the Hays Senior Center, the library, City Hall, and the PROUD magazine.

Ms. Montgomery asked if we should put the volunteers on probation at first, but Ann Clements suggested that probation should be more of an internal thing. Telling volunteers that they are on

probation would likely have a negative impact on them, and may discourage others from signing up.

Ms. Clements also suggested that we advertise our new exhibit on our page of the City's website.

Chairman Jackson reported that we will be working with the City's IT department on installing a security system for the exhibit. Ms. Peters added that it would include a buzzer system, so that if volunteers need help from staff upstairs, they could discreetly buzz for help. Ms. Clark added that the downstairs doorbell is mute; it was agreed that we need to get that fixed.

Cary Bradburn mentioned the importance of having two (2) volunteers downstairs, at all times, for safety reasons, companionship, and in case we have multiple visitors. Ann Clements added that we need to have something for the volunteers to do, during those times when there are no visitors. She added that Mike Davis might be a good person to talk to us about security. Chairman Jackson asked Ms. Peters to ask Mr. Davis if he would do that for us. Deeana Montgomery added that people generally feel safe in Argenta because of the ambassadors who drive around, keeping an eye on things.

Ann Clements suggested that we put volunteer applications at the North Little Rock Tourism office. Chairman Jackson asked Belinda Sykes-Burney about putting applications at the Jones Alumni headquarters. Ms. Clements also suggested putting applications at the Neighborhood Services office in Park Hill.

Kristal Clark said that a Ring camera would work nicely for the front & rear entrances. We could see who is at the door, and speak to them. Plus, they are very affordable.

Chairman Jackson said that we need to check with IT about getting access to WiFi.

Chairman Jackson told the group that there has been no date set for the opening of the exhibit but that we are hoping to open it around the first of next year. She asked the group to, for the next meeting, come up with ideas on what they would like to do for the grand opening. She also reported that the Legacy tree is almost complete.

She reported that the committee is still working on the Beginning, Early Town, Our Building, Military, Police/Fire/Dogtown sections. We are trying to finish the Business/Commerce and Neighborhoods sections. We had initially planned to use technology in the Neighborhoods section but we were advised not to, due to cost and maintenance issues, so we will use lift panels instead. Ann Clements added that we will use *some* technology but lots of QR codes, which seem to be popular.

Chairman Jackson reported that Cary Bradburn and Sonny Rhodes have written "oodles of information" for the QR codes. Jeff Caplinger (with the City) will set up a website for us; the City plans to purchase our domain name from Green Dragon, so we can save the cost of that.

Ann Clements added that the lift panels will list the neighborhoods in each Ward, and each neighborhood will be numbered. The corresponding number will appear on the large map. The lift panels will highlight special things in each Ward. Belinda Sykes-Burney asked how we would balance the neighborhoods. Chairman Jackson described a map of the state at Arkansas Children's Hospital, which served as inspiration for our map.

Kristal Clark asked about the status of the street name change (from the April 2025 meeting). It was reported that nothing ever came of it, that Norman Clifton's request was very premature, and that there are many hoops that he will have to jump through in order to get to that point. It may be years down the road.

Belinda Sykes-Burney gave an update from the Dark Hollow residents. She told the group about the upcoming Dark Hollow Gala, to be held on November 7, 2025, at 6:30 PM, at the North Little Rock Community Center. Tickets will be $50.

The meeting adjourned at 6:41 PM and the group went downstairs to see the exhibit progress.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelli Peters

Kelli Peters, Staff