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MINUTES

North Little Rock History Commission
February 10, 2026

Commission Members Present:

Suzanne Jackson, Chairman
Deeana Montgomery
Sonny Rhodes
Belinda Sykes-Burney

Others Present:

Kelli Peters, Director
Cary Bradburn, Historian

Commission Members Absent:

Ann Clements
Robert Coates

History Commission Chairman Suzanne Jackson called the February 10, 2026 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 January 13, 2026 meeting. Sonny Rhodes moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Deeana Montgomery seconded the motion and it was approved by all in a voice vote.

Staff Report

Kelli Peters reported that Mayor Hartwick has written a letter to long-time director, Sandra Taylor Smith, and Ms. Peters delivered it to her the same day (the previous evening). It referenced a glowing article in the January/February 2026 issue of the *North Little Rock Neighborhood News*, written by Dan Scott. Plans are underway to declare a yet-undetermined date as "Sandra Taylor Smith Day." The exhibit committee is also planning to display a sign at the front desk declaring the exhibit as the "Sandra Taylor Smith Gallery." She then showed the group a graphic of the proposed sign. She reported that the exhibit committee has also finalized the design of the banner they plan to hang on the front of the Heritage Center building, to announce the upcoming exhibit opening, though no opening date has yet been set.

Ms. Peters then passed around items that had been donated recently by Stanislaus Whittlesey, and read a list of the other donations received since the January 13, 2026 meeting. The Commission received the following items from Mr. Whittlesey:

North Little Rock History Commission Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2026

Page 2

1. Postcard of the Old Mill
2. Compliment card from the Big Rock Lodge No. 49 Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen
3. NLR High School baccalaureate service parents ticket (1957)
4. NLR High School graduation invitation (1957)
5. NLR High School baccalaureate service program (1957)
6. NLR High School graduation program (1957)
7. NLR High School senior play program "The Little Dog Laughed" (1957) (2 copies)
8. NLR High School Wildcats football program (Fall 1951)

Items donated by others include:

9. Oval bubble frame portrait of David P. Wood as an infant. Donated by Debra Wood.
10. Bottle of Argenta plum wine (unopened) (2001). Donated by Don Chambers.

Cary Bradburn reported that David Fox will talk about Lonnie Clayton at a Black History Month event at the Sherwood History & Heritage Museum in Sherwood on February 21. Cary plans to attend.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Jackson gave an update on the progress we're making on the permanent exhibit. The carpet has been laid but there is a problem with the dye lots so it will have to be reordered and reinstalled.

Deeana Montgomery reported that she has spoken with Angela Wirt, in charge of the volunteers for the City, through whom all volunteer applicants must go for approval to serve. Ms. Montgomery showed the commissioners the supplemental application that Emilee Hagewood has designed which will be an attachment to the general application available on the City's website. She had put every day of the week on the application but we had already agreed that we only wanted to open the museum on Thursdays & Fridays, and possibly other days, but not on Saturdays.

Belinda Sykes-Burney suggested that we might want to consider being open on Saturdays for special occasions. Cary Bradburn suggested that we could be open on other days by appointment, for groups and such.

Ms. Montgomery continued, stating that we also need to be able to print the application in order to pass them out. We all need to start recruiting volunteers from various organizations that we may be members of, or have knowledge of. Interns might be a good source of volunteers though there will be extra paperwork involved for them.

Chairman Jackson asked Belinda Sykes-Burney if she had anything to report on Black History Month but she said she didn't. But then she added that the Laman Library is sponsoring a program called "Cooking Without A Kitchen," a program that teaches how to cook one-pot meals.

Chairman Jackson then reported that the roof over the building needs a lot of work. Our architect, Gary Clements, has inspected the roof recently and has found problems with the coping around the top of the parapet. We plan to apply for a Historic Preservation Restoration Grant (HPRG) through the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program to see if we can get a grant this year. If we are successful, the HPRG grant would pay around \$51,750 and we would have to pay around \$17,000. Suzanne Jackson, Kelli

North Little Rock History Commission Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2026

Page 3

Peters, Mary Beth Bowman, & Gary Clements are meeting with Mayor Hartwick on Friday morning to discuss the possibility of getting this funding. If granted, we will need to act quickly as the deadline for applying for the grant is March 4. Also, if we are able to get this grant, we will be required to grant a Conservation Easement on the building (which is a standard requirement).

Belinda Burney suggested that we look into applying for museum grants, as well. And Chairman Jackson reminded the group that Ann Clements had suggested applying for an ANCRC grant last month.

The next issues we need to confront are replacing the windows and tuckpointing the brick.

Chairman Jackson informed the commissioners that Ann Clements, Kelli Peters, & she will meet with Shara Hutchcraft on Wednesday, February 25 to go over the planning and promotion of the grand opening of the new exhibit. Deana Montgomery stressed the importance of inviting the donors and city officials for a sneak preview of the exhibit. Ms. Peters mentioned that Ann Clements had suggested holding a “soft” opening for the donors at last month’s meeting. It was agreed by all that we should do that. Chairman Jackson said that Shara is knowledgeable about grand openings and ribbon cuttings.

Potential opening dates were discussed including May 29, but it was decided that June was more realistic.

After Chairman Jackson determined that there was no further business or discussion, she asked for a motion to adjourn. Deana Montgomery moved to adjourn the meeting; it was seconded by Belinda Sykes-Burney, and approved by all. The meeting adjourned at 6:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelli Peters".

Kelli Peters, Director