

MINUTES

STATE CAPITOL COMMISSION

December 15, 2014

1. Introductions / Roll Call

Secretary of State Tre Hargett called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. The roll was taken with the following members in attendance:

- Secretary of State Tre Hargett
- Comptroller Justin Wilson
- Treasurer David Lillard
- Commissioner Bob Oglesby
- Commissioner Bob Martineau
- Senator Jack Johnson
- Representative Gerald McCormick
- Bill Cochran
- Helen "Tootie" Haskins
- Howard Gentry
- Commissioner Larry Martin (arrived late)
- Norman Hill (absent)

2. Approval of Minutes from the May 7, 2014 Meeting

The Minutes were approved as presented.

3. New Business

A. Requests for Exception to Policy Prohibiting Weddings

State Architect Peter Heimbach stated that the two requests were presented to the Department of General Services but, because there was exception taken and a member asked for a discussion of the requests at a meeting, they were being presented to the full Commission for further discussion. Heimbach stated that the Capitol Commission policy is to prohibit weddings and that the requests were to approve the exception to the policy. Heimbach added that both of the requests before them were solely for the use of the Capitol grounds for wedding ceremonies. Hargett asked if the Capitol grounds are included in the policy, and was told "yes".

Gerald McCormick stated that he had requested the meeting. McCormick expressed that the Capitol Commission ought to have a policy and stick by it, particularly in the building, and that the Capitol Commission should be consistent and not grant exceptions because someone knows the right people or is a staffer. Due to the nature of the building, McCormick said he didn't think anyone should be allowed to use the Capitol for weddings. McCormick expressed that he thought that the grounds might be a different issue requiring perhaps a new policy, or the Capitol Commission could continue to make exceptions for use of the grounds. Bob Martineau commented that since both of the requests are for the ceremonies to be conducted outside on the grounds, which are publicly accessible, it was different than having a reception and putting up tents.

Bob Oglesby brought up from the previous meeting minutes that Peter Heimbach had been charged with taking the lead, along with Thad Watkins, David Carpenter, and the TN State Museum, with putting together some recommendations for a new use policy for the Commission's consideration, and asked if the recommendations had been prepared. Heimbach responded that the committee had not been able to put together full recommendations at that time. Oglesby asked if the recommendations of the committee also planned to address the grounds, and was told the charge was for the building, but the grounds could be included.

David Lillard stated that he is approached at various times by people wanting to have weddings in the Capitol, but that he counsels them against it and thinks it is inappropriate to have weddings in the Capitol and on the grounds of Capitol Hill itself. He said the Capitol is not the little wedding chapel on the hill, but is a government building serving an important function of government and is a symbol to many people in Tennessee. Lillard said he thought it was appropriate to designate an alternative spot, such as on the War Memorial Plaza or on the Bicentennial Mall, for such events as the Capitol Commission is granting so many exceptions to the policy that it is going to be totally unenforceable.

Howard Gentry said that these requests continue to put members in a difficult position. Gentry said, if he were getting married, he would not look at a site that had a rule prohibiting weddings. Gentry said the Commission needs to, out of respect for those who are ready to make the commitment, look within its structure to find what is causing people to feel so comfortable to ask for an exception. Gentry said he would like to put a stop to it so that couples won't have to go through the traumatic experience of having their wedding plans decided upon by the Capitol Commission when they're probably just pursuing what someone told them they could possibly do. It may be that a better job needs to be done of informing the powers that be that it is not possible to get an exception to the prohibition against weddings in the Capitol or on the grounds.

Bill Cothran asked if the policy should be absolute or if some place on the Bicentennial Mall might be an appropriate alternative location. Peter Heimbach stated that the grounds are what the Capitol Commission laid out previously as the "contiguous" grounds that include the grounds of the Capitol Building itself and Capitol Hill. Since the Bicentennial Mall is a State Park, Heimbach deferred to Bob Martineau. Martineau stated that they have quite a few weddings on the Bicentennial Mall, mostly around the Carillons with its view of the Capitol in the background. In response to Bill Cothran's comment, Peter Heimbach said he thought any referral to an alternate site would be appropriate when declining a request for policy exception instead of asking to grant exceptions, if that was the will of the Commission.

The Commission heard from the couples who had requested an exception to the policy so that their wedding ceremonies could be held on the Capitol grounds. Gerald McCormick said, it seemed to him, that if they voted on these exceptions, they would be setting a policy. Bob Oglesby suggested that the State Architect bring forward recommendations. Peter Heimbach expressed the difficulty his committee was having in putting together a consolidated use policy. Heimbach added that the statute gives the Capitol Commission authority over non-governmental events in the public spaces of the Capitol. There are other spaces, such as the Governor's office and Legislative Chambers, that are controlled by specific entities or individuals that are not under the purview of the Capitol Commission. There is a gray area between governmental events and non-governmental events where a governmental entity might sponsor an event that is governmentally-related which creates questions as to whether it's under the Capitol Commission's purview or if the Capitol Commission wants to exercise its opinion on the matter.

Tre Hargett stated that there have been six wedding exceptions granted, but that many more have called General Services and told that the policy is to prohibit weddings at the Capitol. Some of those callers have then continued to pursue the right to have a wedding at the Capitol by asking him to approve an exception for them. Hargett said he was continually very discouraging to couples, advising that he could not vote for an exception to the policy.

Tootie Haskins stated that, over the years, she had helped with quite a few weddings in the Capitol. Haskins felt that if someone has a special connection to the Capitol, she was very much in favor of granting an exception.

David Lillard reiterated his concerns about the slippery slope they are going down by making exceptions to the policy. Lillard said that a lot of the exceptions, as pointed out, have been made to

staffers and others who serve the Legislature. But with 40,000 State employees across Tennessee, if you keep granting exceptions for people who work in the Legislature, how are you ever going to deny any State employee. Not only that, he asked how you prohibit citizens who are not State employees when you regularly grant exceptions for persons with Legislative connections. Lillard relayed that there is a distinction between having something in the Capitol or on the grounds of the Capitol, or Capitol Hill, versus other places that have been discussed—Legislative Plaza, War Memorial Plaza, and Bicentennial Mall. Lillard expressed that Capitol Hill has a number of very important sites and that having weddings where President James K. Polk is buried or near the Holocaust Survivors Memorial, both of which are in very solemn arrangements, caused him concern. Lillard said that conduct is not regulated for any wedding that might occur outside the Capitol or on the grounds of the Capitol, nor what people or their guests do at a wedding ceremony. Lillard noted that everyone has different tastes and different approaches and how they want to get married. For the reasons he expressed and others, Lillard stated that he was voting against the exceptions, and as long as he was Treasurer, would be voting against any exception, whether it is in the Capitol building or on the grounds and that his decision was made without even considering anything else like the cost of weddings to the State for extra troopers to man the guard station, and other issues. Lillard said he hoped that the policy would be revised to address all different types of events that people would like to host at the Capitol and would distinguish between events like the TISL and other clearly non-political events.

David Carpenter, Facility Manager of the Capitol, was asked to share his thoughts about the issues described. Carpenter said that one of the biggest challenges he faces is how events at the Capitol impact the tenants, particularly when furniture and food are brought in during the workday. Carpenter said the other issue is how it impacts the facility and the grounds with its statuary, monuments, fiber optics, sprinkler systems, and plants. Larry Martin discussed with Bob Oglesby if the Department of General Services had a process for allowing events on the Legislative Plaza, and was told “yes”. After further discussion, the Commission voted against granting exceptions to the policy for the requested wedding ceremonies. Larry Martin asked Peter Heimbach when he expected to have the new policy prepared, and was told that it was anticipated by the next Capitol Commission meeting.

Peter Heimbach brought up from the floor that an additional request for an exception to hold a wedding reception dinner in the Capitol had been presented to the Department of General Services in the past week. General Services requested that it be brought directly to the Capitol Commission since the meeting was imminent and other exceptions to the policy were on the agenda. The request for the wedding reception dinner failed for the lack of a motion.

4. Old Business

A. Update on Capital Projects

i. Monument to honor David Crockett

Peter Heimbach reported that the State Building Commission had approved the project along with the \$25,000 that had been appropriated, but it was on hold pending additional funding either by appropriation or fund-raising.

ii. Motlow Tunnel Repairs

Chris Remke, Department of General Services, reported that the Motlow Tunnel Repairs project was advancing with plans to begin construction in the summer of 2015. He said there would be considerable deconstruction before the reconstruction, including part of Charlotte Avenue, which would affect the elevator and escalators. Gerald McCormick asked if the tunnel would be closed during session, and was told construction could take approximately one year. Several members voiced their concern

that it would be a major disruption to the Legislature if the tunnel was closed, to which Remke replied that every effort would be made to minimize the disruption.

B. Presentation of Studies

i. National and State Motto Depictions Study

Kem Hinton, Tuck-Hinton Architects, and Jim Douglas, Hodgson-Douglas Landscape Architecture, gave a presentation of the study. After general discussion, the Commission approved acceptance of the study to pass on to the Speakers.

ii. Monuments & Memorials

Peter Heimbach stated that the Blue Ribbon Panel had developed new policy guidelines governing future monuments and memorials on the State Capitol grounds and surrounding State owned property. Justin Wilson asked if the policy would affect existing monuments, and was told “no”. The Commission approved the *Tennessee State Capitol Campus Monuments and Memorials Master Plan* and the policy guidelines for concurrence by the State Building Commission. Peter Heimbach also suggested that the adjacent grounds of the Capitol be modified to include an orphan parcel relating to the baseball park and garage. Bob Martineau asked if concurrence by the SBC was required by statute, and Heimbach responded that it was required.

Regarding a Gulf War monument, Peter Heimbach stated that the Gulf War group does not have a monument to approve, but was proposing that a location be reserved on the War Memorial Plaza for the future. Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder, Department of Veterans Affairs, was asked to address the Commission and stated that the Desert Storm War Monument concept was developed in 1991 and has since been resurrected. Grinder said she realized there will be other related conflicts, but that this was the direction it was going and any support of the Commission would be appreciated. After discussion, the Commission approved the reservation of the location of the court at the North East corner of the War Memorial Plaza for multiple conflicts associated with the Gulf Wars that have grown out of the war on terrorism and related conflicts including Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Peter Heimbach stated that a suggestion had been made to the Tennessee Woman Suffrage Monument Board to locate their proposed monument on the west end of the bridge over Sixth Avenue. He said that, since the location included TPAC’s outdoor space, Kathleen O’Brien and Brent Hyams were involved. Paula Casey was recognized and made a brief presentation regarding the history of the 19th Amendment. The Commission approved the request for a women’s suffrage monument to be erected on the Sixth Avenue bridge. Larry Martin thanked Heimbach for his outstanding job of finding a good location, and Tre Hargett said he was glad they were able to work something out. Representative Sherry Jones was acknowledged, and thanked the Commission for their support.

5. Other Business

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

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