



The Douglas Henry State Museum Commission (DHSMC) Carousel Committee met at 9:00 a.m. on January 14, 2019 in the Tennessee State Museum Conference room with Chairman Thomas S. Smith presiding.

Members Present

Thomas S. Smith, Chair for the Inaugural Meeting
Ambassador Victor H. Ashe
Tina Hodges
Walter Knestrick (phone)
Deanie Parker
Scott Price
Laura Travis

Ex Officio:

Ashley Howell, TSM Executive Director

No Members Absent

Guests in Attendance

Janet Kleinfelter, Deputy Attorney General
Alex Rieger, Deputy Attorney General

Participating TSM Staff

Sharon Dennis, DHSMC Liaison

Other DHSMC Member Present

Robert Buchanan

Call to Order

Chairman Thomas S. Smith called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and proceeded with roll call. He verified that a quorum was present following roll call and presided over the following business.

Welcome and Introduction

Chair Smith welcomed everyone present to the Inaugural Meeting of the *Red Grooms Foxtrot* Carousel Committee and welcomed Commissioner Laura Travis who rolled off the Commission in October and returns as a Governors' appointment representing East Tennessee and a new member Commissioner Scott Price.

Red Grooms Foxtrot Carousel

The agenda of this meeting is to discuss the Red Grooms Foxtrot Carousel. The Red Grooms Foxtrot Carousel was commissioned by the Tennessee Foxtrot Corporation and opened to the

public in Riverfront Park in November 1998. In 1994 the Carousel was dismantled at Riverfront Park and moved to the TSM where it remains in storage. This committee has been formed to evaluate the condition, restoration costs and to determine next steps to resurrect this artifact from storage.

Chair Smith recognized Commissioner Walter Knestrick who gratuitously hosted a symposium in the TSM Digital Learning Center last December with Red Grooms as his key note speaker which resulted in serious inquiry regarding the possibility of reviving and relocating the Carousel. Mr. Knestrick opened acknowledging that the Tennessee Foxtrot Carousel was commissioned by the Tennessee Foxtrot Carousel Corporation who was responsible for the operation which in time became a losing matter due to the expense of staffing and maintenance cost vs ticket revenue. The State of Tennessee made a one-time appropriation to satisfy the debt of the Tennessee Foxtrot Carousel Corp., a 501(c)(3) and took possession via a deed-of-gift signed to the State Museum.

Mr. Knestrick suggested the first order of business to be the consideration of location for reconstruction and viewing. He expressed his preference to middle Tennessee in Nashville and asked committee members for their thoughts on location.

Chair Smith opened discussion and addressed the first question, "do the characters represent state-wide historical figures or more middle Tennessee Nashville figures?" Chair Smith suggested the majority of the characters are more Middle-Tennessee centric and pointed to an outline with photos describing all 36 figures in alphabetical order distributed to Committee members.

Chair Smith emphasized that the Carousel is an artifact of the Tennessee State Museum that is subject to all rules and regulations and it shall remain so. This committee is not authorized to consider any form of deaccessioning and the main objective of this committee is to investigate any and all possibilities to bring this artifact out of storage.

The Chair supported committee members' participation and agreed the task at hand is to create a business plan for the Carousel which would include location objectives, costs for moving, renovating, installing, marketing, maintaining and securing. The issue of reconstructing the Carousel as a static display or as an operational working carousel presents an immense challenge along with the technology and costs to run it. An operational carousel would be a business. He then called upon Mr. Knestrick for his thoughts.

Mr. Knestrick stated due to maintenance of the working parts and the need for staffing, it is not realistic to think that the Carousel may sustain itself. He shared his vision of a location with a glass enclosure with all the music and lights of the Carousel where the children may have photos taken on the Characters; however, the artifact would remain non-operational as an attraction.

Chair Smith shared that Mr. Knestrick was approached at his symposium by a member of the Metro Govt. of Nashville & Davidson County - Parks & Recreation board. They have since met and there is interest in further discussing TSM presenting an Outgoing Loan Agreement for the Parks use of the Carousel as a static display that might have either an enclosure or a roof or something that would preserve the artifact from the elements, and not be operational. We are

very early in any conversation as there are costs associated with this endeavor. These conversations are extremely preliminary. All conversations include the TSM Executive Director.

The Chair personally would be in favor of a proper long-term Outgoing Loan Agreement between the TSM and Metro whereby Metro would be responsible for maintenance and staffing if needed, but the art features, the characters would be visible to the public and called for further discussion. Details in discussion centered around who would be responsible for the costs associated with restoring, moving, maintaining, insuring, staffing etc. It is understood that the Executive has the authority to sign an Outgoing Loan Agreement. There is a different cost in assembling the carousel as static artifact vs an operational artifact. Mr. Knestrick offered that in his discussion, urgency was advanced as Metro Parks is creating a long-term plan.

The question arose with respect to the enormous Red Grooms art collection, whether Director Howell would for see in the future the need to have the Carousel closely associated with this museum both from a site plan standpoint and to complement the Red Grooms collection the museum holds? Director Howell began by saying she is first in line to desire the release of the Red Grooms Fox Trot from storage. This is a good time to cast a wide net, so whether that is talking with Metro of the parks option or the Farmers Market or any other interested party. There were created some rough option/site plans for this site, although it is pretty tight once you add the enclosure. So then it's a question of operations as in security, staffing, maintenance and that's where the business plan comes in. We have some early cost estimates for renovation and generally speaking, the Carousel, the characters are in good shape. It's the mechanism of the Carousel that would have to be replaced.

Chair Smith shared having served on the Governors' Task Force for this site, we don't want to jeopardize what little parking we have and considering the fact that the budget for the new museum has increased significantly, it is prudent for this commission to not engage in anything related to expending state funds for this matter that we couldn't solve in another way which is why when we were approached about this we were open to discussion as it may possibly result in a win-win with minimal expenditure by the State whereas the Carousel once again is visible.

Ms. Parker offered an interim plan of inclusion, an invitation, if you will, to integrate the three grand divisions in in the resurrection of this beloved artifact. To produce a static traveling show to take the Cast of Characters on the road to be adopted individually by every county to exhibit for a period of time before reuniting the Cast of Characters to their new Carousel home in a permanent location. This may be a way to raise funds for the restoration as each county will have the opportunity to hold receptions and parties to celebrate its cast member with a donation box on site as well.

Ms. Hodges observed the brochure presented to members stated each character had a \$25,000 sponsorship when they were created to pay Red Grooms. She suggested going back to each sponsor and ask if they would be willing to donate another \$25,000 each to restore the characters which would amount to \$750,000.

Director Howell noted the cost for machinations and to bring the mechanisms back in order is estimated at about \$300,000. The greater expense will be in the structure which initially General Services estimated at about \$5,000,000. In addition there would be ongoing expense for adequate security, maintenance, operations, etc.

Chair Smith cautioned on the heels of a Capital Campaign to build this new museum with donors pledges and collection encompassing a few more years that we must be sensitive to the generosity of the donors and their ongoing commitments.

Ambassador Ashe cautioned that although the Executive Director has the authority to sign and authorize Loan agreements, the loan of an artifact of this profile and magnitude should first come to the commission and in doing so the Executive Director would be strengthened by the commission's vote to approve or disapprove or modify.

Chair Smith and Director Howell affirmed the suggestion and to the Ambassador's point, Chair Smith stated this is why he appointed a Carousel Committee.

Ms. Travis noted to Ms. Hodges option, people love to leave their legacy in sponsorships. And To Ms. Parkers option, being from a rural county, a lot of the county governments do not have a lot of money, although most have individuals who have money who also may have love and interest in this beloved Cast of Characters.

Mr. Knestrick asked to be recognized and then moved that the Carousel Committee authorize the DHSMC Chair and Executive Director to move forward and continue to have dialogue with the Metropolitan Parks Board and the Mayor of Metro Nashville related to the Carousel; seconded by Ms. Travis first followed by Ambassador Ashe.

Chair Smith called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their thoughtful contributions and options and called for public comment.

Public Comments

Public comment was given by Trudy Byrd.

Adjournment

Chair Smith thanked those present and on the phone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting at 11:48 p.m.

Main Motions Summary

Mr. Knestrick moved that the Carousel Committee authorize the DHSMC Chair and Executive Director to move forward and continue to have dialogue with the Metropolitan Parks Board and the Mayor of Metro Nashville related to the Carousel. Chair Smith called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

Laura Travis
Chair Carousel Committee
Approved July 8, 2019