

# MINUTES

## STATE CAPITOL COMMISSION MEETING

January 19, 2010

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### 1. INTRODUCTIONS / ROLL CALL

Chairman Dave Goetz called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. He noted that a quorum was present with the following in attendance:

#### Members Present

Commissioner Dave Goetz  
Comptroller Justin Wilson  
Treasurer David Lillard  
Secretary of State Tre Hargett  
Commissioner Jim Fyke  
Commissioner Gwendolyn Davis  
Senator Jack Johnson  
Representative Ben West

#### Members Absent

Ray Bell  
Judy Danner  
Norman Hill  
Bobby Lovett

#### Others Present

Mike Fitts, State Architect  
Georgia Martin, State Architect's Office  
Thad Watkins, Department of General Services  
Cheryl Rudy, Department of General Services  
Jim Hoobler, State Museum  
Bill Tolbert, Department of General Services

## **2. REQUEST BY THE COMMUNITY OF FROG JUMP TO BE ADDED TO THE STATE MAP AT THE BICENTENNIAL MALL**

Mike Fitts was recognized and stated that a request had been made by the community of Frog Jump, Tennessee, to Representative Craig Fitzhugh of their desire to be added to the state map at the Bicentennial Mall. Mr. Fitts stated that the map was originally developed based on an official 1974 U.S. map. He said that several communities were added shortly after the map was completed to update it. Since that time, this has been the only written request received that he has seen. Mr. Fitts recommended that, following approval of the Frog Jump request, they evaluate future written requests on an annual, or bi-annual, basis. Secretary Hargett made a motion, seconded by Representative West, to approve the addition of Frog Jump to the state map at the Bicentennial Mall. The motion passed without objection.

## **3. THE COMMISSION'S POLICY NOT TO PERMIT WEDDINGS OR WEDDING RECEPTIONS IN THE STATE CAPITOL**

This item involved discussion of an exception from the Commission's policy not to permit weddings or wedding receptions in the State Capitol. A request had been made by Brent Easley, a General Assembly employee, for allowing his fiancé and him to hold their wedding reception at the Capitol.

Thad Watkins was recognized and stated that, prior to 2004, requests were often made to have their weddings held in the State Capitol. Some of the people were connected to State government, and others just thought the Capitol was a pretty building. He said that with all the restrictions on food and beverages, and the need for a museum curator to monitor the activities, the then Chairman Senator Henry recommended establishing a policy prohibiting the use of the public spaces in the Capitol for weddings and wedding receptions but allowed for the Commission to approve exceptions based on extraordinary circumstances. This policy was adopted by the Commission in 2004. Mr. Watkins stated that, while there have been several requests made, this was the first request made for an exception since the policy was established.

Comptroller Wilson discussed the use of the Governor's Residence for weddings and Mr. Watkins responded that it was under the control of the inhabitants of the Residence. Commissioner Goetz commented that he had attended several receptions at the War Memorial Building, and that it has its own kitchen. Commissioner Fyke stated that he was confused as to the serving of food and drink and red wine, and how it relates to this exception. Mr. Watkins responded that eating and drinking were permitted in the public spaces, except for red wine which can do lasting damage to the floors. He added that food and drink were not allowed in the carpeted spaces, such as the Chambers. He said the Capitol Commission has oversight of the public spaces and that the use of the other spaces is at the discretion of the occupants, including the Constitutional Officers and the Governor.

Commissioner Goetz said that when Brent Easley sent his email, his response for justifying the exception was that he really loves the old building and would like to have

his reception there. Representative West spoke of a past legislative member who was married on the House floor and asked if they make an exception, is it because of who he works for. Comptroller Wilson said this fellow worked there for a long period of time, and that he was more sympathetic with someone who had spent a long time in the Capitol. He said they had the same problem at the Governor's Residence and were able to control it. He asked where they draw the line. He said he would draw the line with any member of the General Assembly and was comfortable with approving it, but understood how it could go the other way.

Commissioner Goetz asked for an assessment of costs and Mr. Watkins responded that Mr. Easley would have to pay for the extra labor and security required, and to abide by all rules. Secretary Hargett commented that it may be so expensive they may not want to do it. He said he would like to know the costs charged by the State. Mr. Watkins commented that it is probably a lot less than any place else since they are charged no rent. Commissioner Fyke asked if they knew the anticipated attendance. Mr. Watkins responded that he didn't know the number, but more people would mean more clean up costs. Representative West asked about parking, and Mr. Watkins responded that there are drawbacks in parking.

Senator Johnson commented that, in 2004, the policy exception was issued under "extraordinary circumstances" and asked if they were faced with changing the policy or granting an exception. Commissioner Goetz stated that it was his recommendation not to change the policy. Senator Johnson said that to have to say "no" to members of the General Assembly under any circumstances seems unfortunate. For those gatherings that are held in the public areas, he asked how they could say "yes" to 30 veterans and not to 100 wedding reception attendants. Mr. Watkins commented that a number of meetings are held in the Capitol with large groups. He noted that there is an exception for State business, but a wedding is for a personal use and the Commission was concerned about the Capitol becoming a 'wedding chapel'. He said it could hurt the décor and integrity of the Capitol. He added that there are a lot of logistical difficulties to holding events in the Capitol.

Commissioner Goetz said, if approved, they would want to see a plan going forward and an agreement to cover contingencies. Mr. Watkins responded that, if the Commission were to vote for the exception, that it would be done. Commissioner Fyke asked if they were now determining that there is an exception for General Assembly employees. Treasurer Lillard made a motion to approve the exception with the condition that appropriate costs were to be paid, an appropriate agreement signed, and a curator from the Museum on board to provide oversight of the usage. Commissioner Goetz said that he would recommend that the users provide a donation to the Museum Foundation in addition to the required costs. Mr. Watkins said he would pass the Commissioner's suggestion to the requestor. Secretary Hargett asked for an advance report of the event details, and Commissioner Goetz asked that they circulate the proposed agreement. Mr. Fitts recommended that a Museum staff member be made available to provide oversight of the event. Treasurer Lillard's motion was seconded and passed without objection.

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.