

MINUTES
STATE CAPITOL COMMISSION
April 29, 2025

1. Introductions / Roll Call

Chairman Jim Bryson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

State Architect Ann McGauran called the roll and a quorum was established with the following members in attendance:

- Commissioner Jim Bryson, Chairman
- Commissioner Matt Van Epps
- Deputy Commissioner Karen Simo, designee for Commissioner David Salyers
- Secretary of State Tre Hargett
- Chief of Staff Roy West, designee for Treasurer David Lillard
- Publication Specialist Paige Donaldson, designee for Comptroller Jason Mumpower
- Comptroller Jason Mumpower (present but not voting)
- THC Chairman Sam D. Elliot
- Senator Jack Johnson
- Representative Chris Todd
- Howard Gentry

Chairman Bryson thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the Minutes from the November 1, 2024 meeting was made and seconded. The motion passed.

3. Public Comment: No public comment requests received.

4. New Business

A. Approval of the Artist selection for the David Crockett statue that will be located on Capitol grounds

State Architect McGauran gave an overview presentation of the artist selection process.

Commissioner Bryson stated that he is very excited about this project and that the General Assembly passed a bill several years ago about putting a David Crockett statue in front of the Capitol.

State Architect McGauran stated that the State Building Commission meeting approved the project and issuing the RFP on December 16, 2024. This procurement followed the standard TN Arts Commission process that has been used for multiple awards. The Artist Selection Committee consisted of 11 members and 11 technical advisors including David Crockett experts, sculptors, legislators, state officials, TN Arts Commission members, architects, and historians. The selection process was managed by TN Arts Commission staff. The RFP resulted in 28 high quality artist proposals from across the country.

Artists were evaluated based on the strength of prior work, rendering and design statement for the new statue, budget, and process understanding in terms of schedule to completion. They were also evaluated on their Tennessee connection. The TN Arts Commission staff reviewed all 28 proposals using the Evaluation Criteria and Scoring Rubric and recommended 8 for removal from evaluation. They presented each proposal to the selection committee who evaluated the remaining 20 proposals and decided to move the top 12 to a second review round. TN Arts Commission staff again presented each proposal. The selection committee discussed the 12 remaining proposals and rescored. The evaluators decided to invite the top 5 artists for interviews. The top 5 were Jamie Lester (75.64 points), Antonio Mendez (73.64 points), Thomas Warren (70.55 points), Brett Grill (69.61 points), and Wayne Hyde (65.82 points).

Each of the 5 artists presented to the selection committee. Several artists presented maquettes of their proposed design. Each artist was scored by the evaluators after their presentation. At that time Jamie Lester was again the top candidate with 90 points. The selection committee discussed the top 5 proposals and TN Arts Commission staff asked each evaluator to rank the proposals against each other with five points being a perfect score. Once this step was completed, Jamie Lester once again received the highest score of 4.9 points. Two artists tied for third place.

The first-place proposal was Jamie Lester's Guardian of the Frontier. He depicted David Crockett on top of stone with his dogs, Rattler and Tiger, beside him in a very strong frontiersman stance.

The second-place proposal was by Thomas Warren and he showed David Crockett in the more traditional stance.

The third-place tied proposals were by 1) Wayne Hyde who had a similar stance as Thomas Warren with a long coat instead of the fringe jacket but still accoutrements of the frontier and 2) Antonio Mendez who depicted David Crockett in the more traditional portrait stance with a dog.

All the artists are willing to tweak their designs and all the evaluators felt incorporating at least one dog was appropriate.

Once the Capitol Commission determines their recommendation for the selected artist then the State Building Commission will be asked to approve the best evaluated proposer and the artist contract can be executed. The TN Arts Commission will communicate and work through the details with the artist and selected state employees. In early fall, the artist will deliver a 1/3 scale clay maquette to state for approval. At that time, there will need to be an approval committee for the clay maquette followed by meetings to coordinate the base with the bronze statue. There will be on-site approval of the full-size statue by the State before casting.

The bronze statue is expected to be completed by artist and placed on top of Motlow Tunnel for a dedication ceremony prior to the end of 2026.

Commissioner Bryson highlighted two issues in front of the Commission. The first would be the selection of artist itself and the next would be the development of a committee to oversee the design.

As to the artist, Commissioner Bryson received confirmation from State Architect McGauran mentioned the artists were ranked three different times and every time Jamie Lester had the highest points score. The recommendation from the selection committee was that the Commission should choose Jamie Lester because of the excellence of his design and his receipt of the highest score in all three rankings.

Motion: Approval of Jamie Lester as the selected artist for the David Crockett statue to be located on Capitol grounds

Discussion: Commissioner Bryson asked to review the slide with the Jamie Lester proposal.

Comptroller Mumpower stated that he thinks it is a great looking piece but asked about the scale of the statue since David Crockett is standing on a rock. State Architect McGauran replied that the question had been discussed within the selection committee who recommended reducing the size and scale of the rocks to increase the overall size of the figure. She added that the expectation has always been that David Crockett would be larger scale statue and the selection committee did not get a sense that it would be a problem. The figure is currently depicted as close to seven feet tall with the preference being eight or nine feet tall. Commissioner Bryson asked if the height was for the whole statue or just the figure. State Architect McGauran replied it would be for the figure.

Commissioner Bryson stated that he loves the incorporation of dogs. State Architect McGauran replied that there was a lot of discussion and many of the evaluators were strongly supportive of incorporating dogs.

Vote: The Commission voted and the motion passed.

Commissioner Bryson stated that he thinks it will be a nice addition to the Capitol.

B. David Crockett design approval committee

Commissioner Bryson stated that the selection committee has recommended that the Commission approve the Chair to appoint a new selection committee to approve the design throughout the process. He asked State Architect McGauran to describe the process this committee would be overseeing.

State Architect McGauran stated that the selection committee discussed the following recommendations: that the figure being a larger scale proportionately to the overall configuration; to make sure the dog figures would be more hound figures in keeping with the type of dog that David Crockett would have had; and that his accessories and buckskin to be more accurate to the period, it terms of less fringe.

Once the State Building Commission approves the selection and the contract is executed then the TN Arts Commission will work with the artist in coordination with the State Museum and the Office of the State Architect to help finalize the statue, making sure that it is historically accurate while keeping the spirit of this design. Then the artist will create a 3' tall maquette that will be approved. She added that there also needs to be a smaller committee that makes sure we have asked all the right questions, incorporated all the right details, and that the statue is true to the imagery of what was approved by the Commission today. If it is not, the artist will need to modify the maquette until the design is fully approved. The approved maquette will be used to create a full-size clay model which is the basis of what is ultimately cast at the foundry which would again be reviewed and approved. State Architect McGauran introduced Ms. Anne Pope of the TN Arts Commission in case there were questions about the process. Commissioner Bryson asked those in attendance who worked on this procurement to raise their hands. He thanked them for their work.

Commissioner Bryson stated that the TN Arts Commission will communicate with the artist to convey the recommendations from the selection committee and connect the artist with experts from the State Museum to ensure historical accuracy in accessories and details and the State Architect's office to assist with coordination of the base. Later this year the artist will produce a 3' tall maquette for design approval by the design approval committee.

Motion: A motion to delegate to the Chair the authority to appoint a design approval committee for the final design of the statue.

Vote: The Commission voted and the motion passed.

C. Amendment to the Tennessee State Capitol Campus Monuments and Memorials Master Plan

The Capitol Commission approved the current Monuments and Memorials Master Plan which is posted on the Office of the State Architect website. The Legislative Plaza Renovations project design requires that most of the memorials on War Memorial Plaza and along Martin Luther King Blvd. be shifted. This amended document recognizes the new locations and will be incorporated into the Monuments and Memorials Master Plan which will also include the new David Crockett statue. State Architect McGauran walked through the new locations. The landscape designer working on the Legislative Plaza Renovations project is the same landscape designer that worked on the Monuments and Memorials Master Plan. Many of the changes are small shifts with the most significant shifts being of the monuments that were located around the fountains. This plan will also identify some future locations. If approved the State Architect will work with the architect, design team and General Services to create a formal revised document.

Commissioner Bryson confirmed that the location of where the monuments are going to be placed has already been decided and this is to incorporate those decisions into the Master Plan. State Architect McGauran replied “yes”.

Motion: A motion to amend the TN State Capitol Campus Monuments and Memorials Master Plan adopted by this Commission on December 15, 2014, to reflect the new location of monuments on the War Memorial Plaza once construction is completed.

Vote: The Commission voted and the motion passed.

D. Reoccurring annual New Year’s Eve Events as requested by TDEC

Deputy Commissioner Karen Simo stated that TDEC is in the process of renewing and extending the existing contract with Music City, Inc., which is the non-profit foundation run by Nashville Convention Visitor’s Corporation. The contract is for Music City Midnight, the Nashville New Year’s Eve celebration located at the Bicentennial Mall State Park. As part of that annual New Year’s Eve celebration, there are a couple of specific requests for the Commission.

One is for lighting the Cupola red for the event. Secondly, for permission to shoot fireworks for less than three minutes with approximately 1,000 3”-5” shells being shot from the Observation Deck on Capitol Hill. Finally, for reservation of the Capitol grounds for the timeframe as appropriate for set up and tear down to ensure limited access to Capitol Hill and for protection of Capitol property.

This is similar to what has been approved in previous years. TDEC is seeking a 2-year approval for the 25/26 and 26/27 New Year’s Eve events.

Motion: A motion to approve use of the Capitol grounds for the New Year’s Eve event for both 25/26 New Year’s and 26/27 New Year’s.

Secretary Hargett stated that typically somebody from Music City, Inc. comes and talks about this. Deputy Commissioner Simo stated that she is bringing it on behalf of the Music City, Inc. because there was relatively short notice of the Capitol Commission meeting but if needed this request could be delayed to as subsequent meeting. Secretary Hargett stated he would not want to give a two-year approval and he would be ok with a one-year approval. Deputy Commissioner Simo amended the motion to a one-year approval.

Mr. Howard Gentry asked if the motion is only being amended because Music City, Inc. is not here and that they should be given a chance to be here. Secretary Hargett said he was under the impression that they were given the chance, but it was short notice. Deputy Commissioner Simo clarified that she was given short notice of the inclusion of this item on the agenda. State Architect McGauran stated that while the Secretary was correct and Music City, Inc. has attended in the past but the last time this request was brought forward to the Commission for approval, TDEC presented it and requested approval.

Commissioner Bryson confirmed that there are no changes to the previous contract, simply an extension to one approved in the past. Deputy Commissioner Simo replied that they are extending the time frame but there are no other adjustments to the agreement. She is comfortable with the one-year approval.

Amended Motion: A motion to approve use of the Capitol grounds for the New Year's Eve event for 25/26 New Year's.

Vote: The Commission voted and the motion passed.

Commissioner Bryson asked Deputy Commissioner Simo to share if this creates a significant problem for the licensee.

E. Discussion on Cupola Lighting as requested by the Secretary of State

Secretary Hargett stated that currently a request to light the Capitol Cupola for an event does not require approval from the Commission and it is often lit in various colors. He stated that the general public does not know what event is being highlighted which defeats the purpose and that the colors are losing significance because of the frequency of lightings.

Commissioner Bryson asked what he would like to accomplish. Secretary Hargett stated that he would like a Subcommittee or the full Commission to be responsible for approving these actions. Currently someone makes an application through the Department of General Services and unless there is a conflict of dates it is "deemed approved" and he doesn't think it was intended, when making the bylaws several years ago, that there would be such an informal process. The lighting of the Cupola should be a significant thing, and people would look at it and think, wow they are doing it because it is a particular day, like Independence Day or Christmas. Secretary Hargett thinks there should be a more formal process and until there is a more formal process we should suspend lighting of the Cupola in color.

Representative Chris Todd agrees that it does lessen the significance with the way it has been done. He agrees it would increase the significance if they did something different. Mr. Howard Gentry suggested that if the Commission suspends lighting the Cupola, it should be for a limited period of time so that it doesn't stay suspended. He didn't disagree with the suggestion that there be a process change to ensure that lighting remains special, but believes that there should be a time limit on the suspension.

Commissioner Van Epps asked if this would include already approved requests. Secretary Hargett stated that if they have already been approved as of today's meeting, they will stand approved but not accept any more. Mr. Sam Elliott asked if this Commission is subject to the Sunshine law and State Architect McGauran replied "yes". Then if this is delegated to a subcommittee then they will need legal advice for that subcommittee because that would be subject to it too.

Senator Jack Johnson asked who approves the requests now. Ms. Christy Allen stated that under the guidelines that were approved by this body in 2015, Cupola lightings are deemed approved events, meaning there is no approval process. Department of General Services receives a request, and they consult with the Capitol to determine whether there are any conflicting requests. If there are none, DGS notifies a preapproval group, an approval group and ultimately Capitol Commission members that there has been a request and it has been approved, sharing the color and the purpose, red for New Year's Eve for example. Senator Johnson stated that ultimately this body has approval of this now, but it is an assumed approval. Ms. Allen replied that was correct. Secretary Hargett stated that there is a perceived approval, for example if a request was to light it blue for the Titans on draft day and a Commission member was not in favor of approving or even the whole Commission was not in favor of approving, they did not have the ability currently to deny the request or bring it to the Commission for a vote. He added that it is assumed that the Department of General Services in its administrative role approves those no matter the event and that the Commission does not have the ability to say no. Mr. Gentry asked if, since DGS asks the members, isn't that like a vote. State Architect McGauran stated that Ms. Allen can read what the memo says but the wording of the memo is not asking for approval. Ms. Allen states that it is not an approval request, and the guidelines say that if a member objects then that item would be discussed at a future Capitol Commission meeting. In the time she has been a part of the process, there hasn't been an objection so she can't tell you how that happens. Mr. Gentry asked what would happen if a member objects today but there isn't a meeting until next quarter, after the date requested. Ms. Allen said her assumption of how it would be handled would be to approve the request pursuant to the guidelines and then discuss at a future Capitol Commission meeting.

Motion: A motion to suspend lighting the Cupola in color until the Commission can establish a process; the suspension would last until December 1, 2025; and all existing approved requests would move forward.

Vote: The Commission voted and the motion passed.

5. Old Business

A. Capital Project Update

Deputy Commissioner John Hull with the Department of General Services gave an update on six capital projects. The projects included were:

1. State Capitol Landscape Upgrades and Retaining Wall Repairs
(SBC #529/005-01-2013)
2. State Capitol Window and Roof Repairs
(SBC #529/005-01-2022)
3. State Capitol Conference Room Audio-Visual Replacement
(SBC # 529/005-02-2022)
4. War Memorial Building Exterior and Interior Renovations
(SBC# 529/090-01-2021)
5. Legislative Plaza Renovations (and Motlow Tunnel)
(SBC # 529/045-01-2022)

Commissioner Bryson asked if the Capitol renovations and the Legislative Plaza projects would be finished by January 2027, the next inauguration. Deputy Commissioner John Hull replied that the War Memorial Building and Legislative Plaza projects will be complete. They are still working on the schedule for the Capitol Window and Roof Repairs. Commissioner Bryson stated it would be nice to have the Capitol Complex looking good. Commissioner Bryson thanked the Department of General Services and Commissioner Van Epps for the work they are doing.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

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