Louisiana

Archaeological

Survey and

Antiquities

Commission

December 14, 2022 Meeting

The Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission met on Tuesday, December 14, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. in a virtual meeting in accordance with Act 302 of the 202 Regular Session.

# Members Attending Electronically:

Dr. Chip McGimsey

Dr. Ryan Gray

Dr. Mark Rees

Ms. Julie Doucet

Mr, Thurston Hahn

Dr. Heather McKillop

Ms. Kim Walden

# Members Absent:

Ms. Kim Walden

Mr. Ray Berthelot

# Others Attending Electronically:

Dr. Diana Greenlee

# Welcome & Introductions

The Chair, Dr. Heather McKillop, called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM. Dr. McGimsey took the notes for meeting.

Dr. McKillop noted in her welcome that she wished everyone well and that they take care of themselves. Everyone introduced themsleves

**Approval of Minutes**

As no prior meetings had been held in 2021, there were no minutes to be approved.

# Old Business

Dr. McGimsey gave a brief update on Division of Archaeology. One staff member, Emily Dale, has already resigned to take a position elsewhere, and Abigail Bleichner has submitted her resignation effective early January 2022. The Division is moving to fill both positions and hopes to conduct interviews before the end of the year. There is relatively little news on the budget front. The Division has been able to hire three student workers to assist with reorganizing collections and records.

Dr. McKillop asked how the Division was managing given the loss of staff. Dr. McGimey replied that having vacant positions was not a new experience and the remaining staff are experienced in divvying up the tasks and moving forward. Dr. Gray also asked about submitting site forms; those can continue to come in as usual and will be handled by Dr. McGimsey.

Dr. McGimsey provided an update on the status of the effort to acquire the Raley property at Poverty Point. The State has reached an agreement to purchase the property and the sale should be completed in early 2022. Dr. McKillop expressed the Commission’s thanks to Kass Byrd and Rep. Francis Thompson for this work on this effort. Dr. Rees asked what archaeology would be done at the new property. Dr. Greenlee replied that the initial anticipated appropriation for the property includes funding for survey and that she had been in touch with Dr. Jerrod Burks about undertaking GPR and/or gradiometry surveys.

He also noted that the Capitol Park Museum has expressed interest in redoing the Poverty Point permanent exhibit. He mentioned several recent projects that involved the use of Human Remains Detecting dogs in the search for both pre and post-contact cemeteries. And finally he noted that the magazine, 64 Parishes, published by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities for the fall 2022 issue will be devoted to Louisiana and regional archaeology.

# New Business

Archaeology Month Update

Maegan Smith provided a summary of this year’s Archaeology Month activities. There were 29 total events, some of which were virtual, with an estimated total of 10,200 attendees. The Division collaborated with the River Road African-American Museum on displaying the archaeology posters.

Dr. McKillop noted the 4th International Congress on Salt will be held at LSU in the fall of 2022.

Poverty Point Update

Dr. Diana Greenlee provided a summary of esearch efforts at Poverty Point World Heritage Site over the past year.

She discussed work at the along the southeast ridge, and the central plaza rise. Both appear to represent intentional constructions that have been subsequently buried by later plaza fill. The purpose and function of each remains uncertain.

Dr. McKillop asked what artifacts were found in the ridge feature. Dr. Greenlee replied that they had floated all the cores and while artifact are present, there are none from the actual feature fill. In her discussion of the central plaza rise, Dr. Greenlee mentioned that one possible explanation for its formation is that it is a mud volcano. Dr. Rees asked about the volcano idea. The rise is approximately 20 m across and 1.0-1.5 m high. This is in the range of sizes for known mud volcanos, but at this point, there is little evidence to support or reject this hypothesis.

# Other Business

Dr. Rees noted that the annual meeting of the Louisiana Archaeological Society would be held Feb 11-13, 2022, at the Baton Rouge Hilton Hotel. Ms. Watson added that Dr. Jayur Mehta would be the keynote speaker. There was followup discussion of the meeting.

Dr. Rees also noted that another stage of the MRDAM project may be funded. ULL, LSU, and the South Central Climate Science Center at Tulane have submitted a proposal to beginning planning and regional consultations with interested parties on the impacts of coastal land loss.

Ms. Kim Walden noted that the National Science Foundation is supporting a f-year effort with Tribes, LSU, and Florida State University about coastal land loss and the cultural effects to communities.

Dr. Ryan Gray asked a question about the proposed Entergy powerline that would pass through the Port Hudson battlefield. At this point, the parties are waiting on the Corp of Engineers to schedule the next consultation meeting.

Ms. Walden noted the Chitimacha Tribe is participating in the Blue Corn project, an effort to bring back traditional varieties of maize. The Tribe participated in the first known planting of this variety in the last 150 years.

***Motion:*** *Dr. Mark Rees moved that the Commission meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Dr. Ryan Gray. The motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 PM.

