

Louisiana
Archaeological
Survey and
Antiquities
Commission

December 11, 2018 Meeting

The Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission met on Tuesday, December 11, 2018, at 1:30 p.m. in the 4th floor conference room, 1051 N. 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Members Present:

Dr. Chip McGimsey
Dr. Heather McKillop
Mr. Ray Berthelot
Dr. Mark Rees
Ms. Jessica Diez

Members Absent:

Dr. George Riser
Ms. Kim Walden
Ms. Pat Arnould
Ms. Kathe Hambrick

Others Present:

Dr. Rachel Watson
Ms. Megan Kenny
Dr. Valerie Feathers
Ms. Emily Dale

Welcome & Introductions

The Chair, Dr. Heather McKillop, called the meeting to order at 1:38 PM.

All persons at the meeting introduced themselves.

Dr. McKillop made several introductory remarks. She noted that the 4th International Congress on the Anthropology of Salt will be held at Louisiana State University in November 2020. She also noted that there is now a separate PhD for anthropology at Louisiana State University, and with the program expansion there will be a total of 10 graduate fellowships available for students. Dr. McKillop highlighted several articles recently published by Division staff, including Dr. Feathers and Dr. Watson, that involved their dissertation research on Maya sites in Belize. Dr. McKillop was also interviewed for National Public Radio's Science Friday program concerning her research in Belize.

MOTION: *A motion was made by Ms. Jessica Diez and seconded by Mr Ray Berthelot, to accept the minutes of the September 11, 2018, Antiquities Commission Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.*

Old Business

Budget and Division Update

Dr. McGimsey noted that Ms. Ashley Fedoroff, the Division's Collections Manager, resigned at the end of October. The position has been advertised and interviews of prospective candidates has begun. The position is expected to be filled early in 2019.

New Business

Archaeology Month Update

Dr Feathers provided an update on activities undertaken as part of Louisiana's Archaeology Month for 2018. There were four activities hosted by the Division, one on each weekend of October. The first was Saturday, 6 October, at the Capitol Park Museum in Baton Rouge entitled "Louisiana Archaeology Talks". There were five talks by archaeologists followed by a question and answer session, and there were exhibits of artifacts from the featured sites in the back of the room. On October 13, the Living in the Past event was also held at the Capitol Park Museum. It featured a series of seven stations for kids to explore various aspects of archaeology, including a dig box, atlatl throwing, pot making, flint-knapping, and other activities. On 20 October, a series of demonstrations were held at the St. Tammany Parish children's museum in conjunction with International Archaeology Day. And finally, on 26-28 October, the Baton Rouge chapter of the Louisiana Archaeological Society hosted a cleanup at Marsden Mounds at Poverty Point State Park. This activity involved clearing brush off of Mound A so that it was visible to visitors. Mr. Ray Berthelot expressed the appreciation of the Office of State Parks for the work done at the site. Dr. Feathers distributed copies of the Archaeology Month poster to all members of the Commission who wanted some.

Dr. McGimsey asked for an update on Archaeology Month activities around the state. Dr. Feathers replied that there were several events at Poverty Point World Heritage Site, a Maya astronomy event at Leesville, several lectures at Tulane, and a total of 24 events around the state. Several LAS chapters held events at various places.

Dr. McKillop noted that Dr. Feathers was also president of the Baton Rouge chapter of the LAS, and that the chapter had been very active in recent months. Dr. Feathers replied the chapter had hosted five workshops in 2018 in addition to their regular monthly meetings. She also mentioned the upcoming chapter Christmas party to be held at the LSU Rural Life Museum and invited all the Commission members to attend.

Poverty Point Permit Request – Binghamton University

Dr. McGimsey noted that BU had submitted a draft proposal to Dr. Greenlee and Dr. Greenlee and Dr. McGimsey had reviewed it and provided comments to the BU staff. They then submitted a revised proposal which has been accepted by Drs. Greenlee and McGimsey. Dr. McGimsey also noted that he had forgotten to ask BU to provide a Powerpoint presentation for the Commission, but that Dr. Carl Lipo was available to answer any questions the Commission might have.

Mr. Berthelot asked how different this proposal was from the proposal that had been approved at the March 2018 meeting of the Commission, and if not substantially different, did the Commission need to review and approve this proposal? Dr. McGimsey noted that in March, the Commission had approved a permit for Ms. Kelly Ervin of Washington University, who did not pursue her project at Poverty Point, as well as a permit for BU. Likewise, BU had applied for a permit for investigations in the summer/fall of 2018, but cancelled their plans prior to the actual issuing of the permit. Thus, the permit process has essentially begun with the new proposal that is now before the Commission.

Dr. Rees noted that the proposal was a very good project. He asked about the disking of the Mound B field and what prior work had been done there. Dr. McGimsey replied that Carl Alexander and others had made collections from the field but the field had not been segregated in areas during that earlier work and thus materials were known only from the field overall. He noted that the types of materials found at the Mound B field differ significantly from those found on the ridges. Dr. Rees asked if the disking would be monitored to determine if any features are encountered during this effort. Dr. McGimsey replied that the plan was for the field to be disked prior to BU arriving at the site, and that Dr. Greenlee and Alisha Wright would monitor the disking effort. It is anticipated that the disking will be only six inches in depth. He also noted that someone will be at the disked area during daylight areas until the surface collection is completed to ensure that visitors don't remove any artifacts. There was further discussion of how the disking will be accomplished.

MOTION: *A motion was made by Mr. Ray Berthelot and seconded by Dr. Mark Rees, to approve a permit for Binghamton University to conduct archaeological investigations at Poverty Point World Heritage Site. The motion carried unanimously.*

Poverty Point Permit Request - University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Dr. McGimsey noted that Dr. Hillman had provided a Powerpoint presentation and was available by phone to present the proposal to the Commission. Dr. Hillman described the project as an effort to assess the impact of mound-building at the site by examining cores from the depression immediately west of Mound A. The presentation reviewed the proposed work plan and what data they hoped to obtain from this effort.

Dr. Rees asked how many cores would be taken? Dr. Hillman replied that 4-6 cores were planned; one would be 4.5 inches in diameter and at least three others would be three inches in diameter. Dr. Rees also asked if the cores would be curated upon completion of the project; Dr. Hillman replied that the cores would be split for analysis and one half of each cores will be archived for future examination. Dr. Rees stated that it was unlikely there would be evidence of copper smelting or agriculture, but that there was great potential for data on punctuated evidence of land-use changes and mound-building. Given the recent hypotheses about the narrow window for construction of Mound A, Dr. Rees asked if the anticipated dating of the core would be sufficient to pick up abrupt changes in landscape use? Dr. Hillman indicated that at Cahokia they had developed an age-model initially, and then identified additional dates to better define the period of construction and use. A similar approach is anticipated at Poverty Point. She expects to run 2-3 dates initially with perhaps an additional 1-2 dates as necessary.

Dr. McKillop asked whether there was really an expectation of finding copper-working, and where the radiometric samples would be dated? Dr. Hillman replied that the dates would be run by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Lab, or perhaps at the University of California at Irvine. She noted she has a funding source through her position at ULL to pay for the dates.

Mr. Berthelot asked how they plan to access the depression to take the cores. Dr. Hillman replied that she would be talking with Dr. Greenlee, but that in the past they have cored from a small inflatable raft. She will clarify with Dr. Greenlee as they get closer to the field date.

Dr. McKillop asked if the project is a MA or PhD project; Dr. Hillman replied that most of the work will be done as a Master's project. She also indicated that the research would be published when completed.

Dr. Rees noted that while Dr. Hillman is very experienced in her field, that she is clearly lacking in an understanding of Poverty Point and how her data will inform our understanding of the site. Dr. McKillop noted that she will be providing specialized knowledge that other archaeologists can incorporate into their research about the site. There was further general discussion of this issue. It was noted that Dr. Greenlee will record the location of the cores, and has the locations

of Dr. Scharf's cores such that they can avoid coring in the location where the previous cores were taken.

MOTION: *A motion was made by Mr. Ray Berthelot and seconded by Dr. Mark Rees, to approve a permit for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette to conduct archaeological investigations at Poverty Point World Heritage Site. The motion carried unanimously.*

Other Business

There was no other business.

Motion: *Dr. Mark Rees moved that the Commission meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Mr. Ray Berthelot. The Motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.