Louisiana

Archaeological

Survey and

Antiquities

Commission

September 13, 2022 Meeting

The Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission met on Tuesday, September 13, 2022, at 1:30 p.m.

# Members Attendin:

Dr. Chip McGimsey

Dr. Ryan Gray

Mr, Thurston Hahn

Dr. Heather McKillop

Ms. Kim Walden

Mr. Chandler Vidrine

Dr. Mark Rees

# Members Absent:

Mr. Ray Berthelot

Ms. Julie Doucet

# Others Attending:

Dr. Rachel Watson

Ms. Renee Erickson

Ms. Helen Bouzon

Mr. Sam Huey

Mr. George Gelé

Dr. TR Kidder (electronically)

Dr. Diana Greenlee (electronically)

# Welcome & Introductions

The Chair, Dr. Heather McKillop, called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. Dr. McGimsey took the notes for meeting.

In her introductory remarks, Dr. McKillop noted the recent publication of an article by Dr. Brooks Ellwood and colleagues concerning the age and construction of the LSU Campus Mounds (16EBR6). She also noted that the LSU Department of Geography and Anthropology will be hosting the 4th International Congress on Salt on October 12-17, 2022.

The meeting attendees introduced themselves

**Approval of Minutes**

As the secretary had forgotten to send out the minutes of the last meeting, approval of the March meeting minutes was postponed until the next Commission meeting.

# Old Business

Dr. McGimsey gave a brief update on Division of Archaeology. The
division has two new staff members who joined in the spring. Ms. Renee Erickson has joined the Division as its Section 106 reviewer and Mr. Sam Huey is the new site files manager, Mr. Sam Huey, is also now. He noted that the Division’s finances remain in good shape.

Dr. McGimsey discussed the recent paper on the LSU Campus Mounds. He, along with Dr. McKillop and other colleagues are in the process of drafting a response to that paper which is anticipated to be published in the November issue of the SAA Archaeological Record. He also noted that American Archaeology, the magazine of The Archaeological Conservancy, is planning an article as well. A question was raised as to whether the investigations discussed in the published paper were done under a permit issued by the Commission. Dr. McGimsey replied that yes, the 2009, 2012, and 2018 investigations were done under a permit. Dr. McKillop offered additional comments about the Ellwood et al. paper.

Dr. McGimsey noted that October is Archaeology Month. A list of al scheduled activities is available at the Division’s website, and copies of the poster are available if anyone wants one.

# New Business

 Permit Request – Dr. TR Kidder

Dr. Kidder joined the meeting via Zoom and delivered a powerpoint presentation on his proposed investigation at Poverty point World Heritage Site. His work builds on a previous investigation where a previously excavated unit was reopened to acquire more detailed stratigraphic data and new samples for magnetic susceptibility and dating, with the goal of better understanding the timing and pace of ridge construction. The proposed project, scheduled for November/December of 2022, will expand that project to include at least two and perhaps four more units. Each of the selected units will be reexcavated so the profiles can be reexamined and new samples collected. Each unit will be backfilled upon completion. Dr. Kidder has also made arrangements with the Park to offer various public outreach opportunities while the field work is ongoing.

Dr. Rees asked if Dr. Kidder will be on-site during the project. Dr. Kidder replied that he would be, unless family health issues made it impossible for him to be present. In that situation, the project would likely be postponed. Dr. Rees asked if the previously excavated sediment removed from the old units will be water-screened? Dr. Kidder replied that while the backfill dirt will not be screened (but may be set aside for public screening projects), any previously unexcavated sediment would be water-screened. This will include materials as the walls are cut back for clean profiles and any contexts of uncertain provenience. He noted that he and Dr. Jon Gibson have been debating the age of the ridges for the last 10 years.

Dr. Rees asked if the excavation was on the Archaeology Month calendar. Dr. Mcgimsey replied that it was not at the moment but it was a good idea to add it. It is anticipated the the UNO anthropology club will visit as well as Division staff.

***Motion:*** *Dr. Mark Rees moved that the Commission approve the permit request by Dr. Kidder. It was seconded by Mr. Thurston Hahn. The motion passed unanimously.*

 Permit Request – Dr. Diana Greenlee

The Division and Commission issue an annual permit to Dr. Greenlee to conducted limited investigations at the Poverty Point World Heritage Site as part of her responsibilities as the Station Archaeologist. This year, the permit is for two years, as the Division has shifted to a two year grant cycle for funding the Station program.

Dr. McGimsey noted that the State has recently acquired the Raley property on the south side of the State Park. The acquisition not only provides a buffer on that side of the site, but includes a portion of the sixth ring that extends outside of the Park’s current boundaries. The long term goal is for this property to be the location of a new visitor’s center for the Park.

***Motion:*** *Mr. Vidrine moved that the Commission approve the permit for Dr. Greenlee. It was seconded by Dr. Gray. The motion passed unanimously.*

Dr. McKillop asked if there was any other new business. Dr. Gray noted that UNO will be hosting a presentation on African-American cemetery preservation in October. He will provide the details when they become available. Dr. McKillop asked Mr. Hahn if Coastal Environments was doing any interesting archaeological projects. Mr. Hahn replied that they had a couple of large surveys ongoing in the Baton Rouge area but that there were no site excavations anticipated. He noted that most contract archaeology firms in the state have been very busy these past few years.

Ms. Walden noted that the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana is working with Coastal Environments to develop a aproject to protect a section of shoreline where several sites are eroding out. They will be applying for a NOAA grant to install the barriers along the west side of Bayou Sale.

Dr. Rees commented that Mr. Josh Guillory, Lafayette Parish Consolidated Government president is under investigation for a drainage control project in the parish. The Lafayette preservation commission apparently approved the removal of buildings in the project area with the provision that a cultural resources survey be conducted. The survey was not undertaken. The project area lies near a known natural spring and the Indian Hills subdivision where several sites are known to exist.

Dr. Rees asked if future Commission meetings could be streamed live so that individuals interested in the meeting could at least observe. It will be necessary to check on the State’s policy regarding this issue before proceeding.

Dr. Rees also noted that he has been very interested in the news about the LSU Campus Mounds. In a larger perspective, he noted that there is a general lack of interest for studying these early sites across Louisiana among professional archaeologists. He urged the participants to consider developing an institute or center devoted to the study of early sites. He would encourage American Indian Tribes to participate in this process. Dr. McKillop noted the need for archaeologists working in the state, specifically getting students involved in Louisiana archaeology. She observed the Dr. Rebecca Saunders, currently Curator of Anthropology at LSU Museum of Natural Science, will be retiring at the end of this year. Replacing here with an archaeologist actively working in Louisiana and/or the southeastern US will be critical to addressing this need. She noted the in public presentations on the LSU Campus Mounds, Dr. Ellwood does not mention archaeology or archaeologists. She believes there is an opportunity with the recent interest in the Campus Mounds to push the hiring of a southeastern archaeologist. Dr. Rees agreed that the news provides an opportunity to create something that could have long-lasting impacts. Ms. Walden noted that Tribes may be willing to advocate with possible donors.

# Other Business

Ms. Walden noted that LSU is currently working on a redesign of the entire campus and there have been specific discussions on how best to preserve the Campus Mounds. She also noted that the University has been working on a land acknowledgement statement. Dr. McKillop recommended contacting Ashley Berthelot Arcenaux in the LSU President’s Office for assistance. Dr. Gray noted that donors and various kinds of grants are willing to fund equipment and facilities but the funding rarely extends to supporting staff for these positions.

Mr. George Gele came a relatively brief overview of his project since he was last before the Commission in 2010. He has been investigating an unusual feature on the seafloor near the Chandeleur Islands in Breton Sound that he believes represents a pyramid or similar structure that greatly predates the earliest known people in the state. He provided copies of his latest research proposal to each Commission member, and then summarized the findings as they are detailed in the proposal. Earlier this year he participated in a podcast that has been viewed by over 70,000 people around the world. The feature includes cut and shaped granite blocks – the stone has been sourced to Minnesota. There are also fragments of French roofing tiles and some kind of poured materials similar to concrete. He believes all these are elements of a now collapsed building at this location. He wants to return to the site to conduct additional investigations, including recovering some additional materials for examination. As the site lies in State waters, he needs a permit from the Commission and part of the permit is identifying a qualified marine archaeologist to direct the project. Mr. Gele has been unable to find a marine archaeologist to join his team but continues searching. He is also hoping that LUMCON might undertake some surveys of the area but they generally require funding to undertake a project like this. He also noted that the History Channel may do a show on his discovery.

***Motion:*** *Ms. Walden moved that the Commission meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Mr. Vidrine. The motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 PM.