

HISTORY COMMISSION

March 2, 2022

A meeting of the History Commission was held this date at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom Webinar.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Commissioners: Harlan Greene, Chair, Nicholas Butler, Peg Eastman, Wilmot Fraser, Angela Mack, David McCormack, and Dale Theiling.

City Staff: Philip Clapper, Jennifer Cook, and Velvett Simmons

1. Call to Order

Chair Greene called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. December 15, 2021

Mr. Theiling said he had read over the minutes and listened to the recording. He said that there were a few things he felt they should consider changing. It had taken him some time, and there had not been enough time to get the corrections back to the Commission for full consideration.

Chair Greene said they would be able to hold a Special Meeting to approve the minutes if City Council required the records before the next regular meeting.

Mr. McCormack asked if others could not submit corrections that day.

Chair Greene said that Mr. Theiling's changes were extensive, and that he himself had also sent in corrections. The deferral gave everyone time to submit further corrections. It would take time to make them.

Mr. McCormack asked if they could see a copy of the requested changes so the Commissioners knew what was being changed.

Chair Greene asked Mr. Theiling to summarize his changes.

Mr. McCormack said a copy would be fine; he did not want to belabor the discussion.

Mr. Theiling said that one reason it was not being covered was because it did not perfectly fit the format preferred by the Clerk of Council. Sending it out as it was would have been artificial. He would have preferred Mr. Clapper make the changes so that they were in line with the Clerk's Office, and then send it out. He did not want to be a complicating factor.

Chair Greene said it could be easily edited by Mr. Clapper, and then sent out. He also did not wish to unduly complicate things.

Dr. Fraser said he also wanted to amend the minutes. He was alright with deferral.

On the motion of Dale Theiling, seconded by David McCormack, the Commission voted to defer the December 15, 2021 minutes, with the understanding that changes would be made and that a Special Meeting could be called for their approval, if necessary.

The vote was not unanimous. Wilmot Fraser abstained.

Chair Greene asked when Commissioners ought to have their changes sent in.

Mr. Clapper said there had been some small changes made based on the YouTube recording that made the minutes more accurate to reflect how things were assumed to have been meant. Commissioners could send him changes within the week, so that he could edit and then send the changes out to the rest of the Commission. He could have the changes finished by the end of the day they were sent in.

Chair Greene said the quicker the Commissioners sent in their corrections, the quicker the minutes could be sent back out.

3. New Business

a. Judge Fields Plaque

Chair Greene asked Judge Susan Herdina if she wanted to present on the Item.

There were technical difficulties. Judge Herdina was unable to speak over the video conference call.

Councilmember Shahid said he was there, as well.

Chair Greene asked if Councilmember Shahid wanted to present on the Item.

Councilmember Shahid said he could.

Over a year prior, Council had recognized Judge Fields by resolution, and marked his 100th or 101st birthday, there had been some confusion as to which it was. During the presentation, they had made a motion on Council to erect a marker of some sort that dedicated one of the Municipal Courtrooms in his honor, recognizing his long tenure as a lawyer and as a judge, and the services he performed to the community, including as a municipal judge, a family court judge, and a circuit court judge.

He believed Judge Fields had been the first African American attorney to be admitted to the bar post-Reconstruction, which was a milestone in and of itself. His service under Mayor Gaillard was a remarkable gesture by the Mayor at the time, and it was unprecedented. They had had a lot of firsts in Charleston, and he wanted to recognize Judge Fields, preferably in the downstairs courtroom. It would be named in his honor. The Commission had a copy of the proposed language.

Chair Greene thanked Councilmember Shahid. He said the only problem he saw with the language was the lack of capitalization for the word "black," which was generally accepted in newspapers and like media to be spelled as "Black." It was in the second paragraph, 5 lines down. He asked for further questions.

Mr. McCormack said Judge Fields was one of the best judges he had ever gone before. He was a quintessential gentleman who knew the law and ruled fairly, which was all a lawyer could have asked for. He thought Councilmember Shahid would agree.

Councilmember Shahid said he agreed 100%.

Mr. McCormack said Judge Fields was a "class act."

He said that in the biographical information provided, it said that he was "one of the first" African Americans to open a law office in Charleston since the early 1900s. The plaque itself said he was "the first." He was unsure as to whether the biographical language was correct, or the language on the plaque.

Councilmember Shahid said he had forwarded the information to Judge Deirdre Jefferson, who had succeeded Judge Fields and had served under him as a law clerk. She had said there were only three Black lawyers in South Carolina. One was a farmer in North Carolina, and another was in the upstate. Neither were able to make money as a lawyer. While both had been admitted to the Bar, Judge Fields was the only one who actually opened a law office and established a practice in Charleston. He often remarked at events that during his first year, he lived at home with his parents, who were "pleased as punch" that he earned a fee for the entire year of \$500. That information was from Judge Jefferson. It was a part of the oral history. He did not know if there was a way of officially tracking the information using the South Carolina Bar association.

Chair Greene asked if there was any further discussion.

Dr. Fraser wanted to know if the language would go on the plaque as it was, or if it was just information.

Chair Greene said there was a particular document that would be taken as the language for the plaque. He believed that was the wording that would be put in the courtroom.

Dr. Fraser said that if that were true, then he recommended that the information be rewritten to more accurately describe Judge Fields' importance in the legal community. The document as it stood ended with "This courtroom

is dedicated to Judge Fields,” when it should have begun that way, instead. That way, people would understand and learn, even if they didn’t have the time to read the whole plaque.

Some of the information that was contained in the document seemed to him to have been relegated to lower paragraphs, rather than to the beginning. The courtroom was being dedicated to the Judge because of his service, and because he was the first African American municipal judge. He thought it could have been written in such a way that it would reflect the importance of the various eras in his life and service.

Chair Greene asked if Dr. Fraser had any specific language.

Dr. Fraser proposed the following: “the first Black municipal judge to serve in the City of Charleston’s municipal court. Judge Fields was appointed as a municipal judge for the City of Charleston. He was elected a family court judge in 1975, and in 1980 was elected a State of South Carolina circuit court judge, where he served until his retirement in 1992.” He felt the other information was ancillary and less important. If someone didn’t get the chance to read the whole thing, the reader still had a clear understanding of why the courtroom was being dedicated to Judge Fields.

Chair Greene said there was some amount of audio problems. He asked which sentence Dr. Fraser meant to start with. He thought that the only way they could proceed was if they had a text already written out that they could motion and vote on.

Dr. Fraser said he wanted to simply recommend to the sponsors that they rewrite the plaque so that that the personal pieces of information regarding Judge Fields were nearer to the top of the citation.

Chair Greene asked if there was a tight deadline to work around.

Councilmember Shahid said Judge Fields was 101 years old, so they just wanted to get the dedication done as fast as possible. He was in good health and active in the community, but he wanted it done as fast as possible for that reason.

Chair Greene asked if Judge Fields’ birthday was known.

Councilmember Shahid said it was in October, though he did not know the exact date.

Chair Greene said it would have been great to have his birthdate on the plaque, because that would show his significance, if it was available, and if the text went back for rewriting.

Ms. Mack said she agreed with Dr. Fraser that perhaps the paragraphs should have been reversed, so people immediately understood that Judge Fields was being recognized first because of his wisdom, compassion, and the respect that he garnered, then followed by the honors he had received, and finally going into his education, and perhaps his role in his church. That way, all of his judicial and legal experience was at the beginning. She also agreed adding his birthdate was extremely important. It was more like the presentation of a CV, instead of a chronological approach. She thought it would have much more relevance that way in the space that it would be in.

Chair Greene recognized Mr. Butler.

Mr. Butler said he would volunteer to look up Judge Fields’ birthday. The Charleston County Public Library still held copies of municipal birth records. If he was born before 1926 in the City limits, then they would have the birth record.

Ms. Mack said they could also ask Judge Fields.

Councilmember Shahid said he may have been confused, as he kept telling people he was only 100.

There was laughter.

Chair Greene asked if they could wait until the next meeting to sort out the document.

Councilmember Shahid said that the recommendations given were right on point. He said he needed to “quit writing like a lawyer,” as they did things in chronological order. He agreed that they wanted to highlight his

achievements and why they were dedicating the room to him. He asked Mr. Butler to email him the information on Judge Fields' birthdate, if it was found. They could have it ready before the next meeting.

Chair Greene said that would be fine. They liked to have documents prepared 10 days in advance.

On the motion of Wilmot Fraser, seconded by Peg Eastman, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend amending the document concerning the life and contributions of Judge Richard Fields as discussed.

Judge Herdina said she apologized for the technical difficulties, but that she would be helping Councilmember Shahid, and would be happy to answer any questions at the following meeting.

They were talking about placing the plaque on the outside of first floor courtroom, which was the larger of the two courtrooms and the one used most often.

Chair Greene said it was great to know that the plaque would go where people could see it.

Mr. Theiling said there were other Centenary United Methodist churches, so he thought it would be more proper to specify that it was the church in Charleston.

Regarding the second paragraph, on the third line, he asked if it was proper to call Judge Fields a judge when referring to him before becoming a judge.

Chair Greene said he felt that was a matter of style, but it was a valid point. They were in the present writing about the past. If it would be an issue with Mr. Theiling's acceptance, he thought it would be best to put that suggestion forward.

Mr. Theiling said it would not be an issue for his acceptance.

Councilmember Shahid said he was already going to make that change.

Chair Greene said it could also have been changed to "he," allowing for more room for words.

Mr. Theiling said that at the very end of the third paragraph, there was punctuation that needed to be corrected. There needed to be a period instead of a comma.

b. "The Mart" Marker

Chair Greene said that Councilmember Mitchell had said he may not have been able to make the meeting, but requested that the word "slave" be changed to "enslaved," or similar such wording.

Mr. Clapper said that Councilmember Mitchell had specifically been speaking about the instances of the word in the "Slave Pen" marker, but was sure that he would have a similar comment for the other use, as well.

Chair Greene thanked Mr. Clapper.

Dr. Fraser said he wanted to suggest the following language: "One of Charleston's main sites for public auctions" either "for enslaved persons" or "of the enslaved."

Chair Greene said that they had done it side by side, line by line in the past. He asked Dr. Fraser to share his changes line by line.

Dr. Fraser said he would cut "this was" from line 1, and put "Once one of Charleston's main sites for public auctions of the enslaved."

Chair Greene said that would not be a complete sentence. He assumed it was a standard on all State historical marker plaques, at least all that they had dealt with, that they did not use sentence fragments.

Mr. McCormack said he knew the Archives people were very precise with their research. He asked if it was the main site. If it was the main site, then it was the main site. Certainly, there were other places where auctions were held, but he did not see the necessity for changing the language put together by the Archives, which did a "jam-up job" on every marker. He therefore did not see the purpose of the discussion.

Dr. Fraser said that at South State Bank on Broad Street, there was another plaque that was put there recently referring to it as a place where the enslaved were sold.

Mr. McCormack said there was one at the Exchange Building. He was not saying there weren't other ones, but that the one being discussed was the main one.

Dr. Fraser said Ryan's Mart just so happened to continue to exist as a historical building, but there were a number of places where people were bought and sold. Some of them might have been larger than Ryan's.

Chair Greene recognized Mr. Butler.

Mr. Butler said that from 1856-1863, during that 7-year time period, Ryan's Mart was the principal sale site, but only for those 7 years. Looking at the larger landscape, it was one of many sites. If one counted the number sold at Ryan's, it was likely far less than the number sold at the New Exchange Building, as well as the previous Exchange Building. It was literally one of many sale sites, and was the principal site only for that 7-year time period. He said that Dr. Fraser was therefore correct. They needed to put it in the proper historical context, and the State had missed that detail.

Chair Greene proposed: "This is one of Charleston's sites for public auctions of enslaved people." He asked Dr. Fraser if that would work.

Dr. Fraser said "of enslaved people" or "of the enslaved" would have worked.

Chair Greene asked if he did not want the word "slave" as an adjective for "auction."

Dr. Fraser said that was correct. The corrected version spoke about the act of enslavement. Rather than tying the word specifically to those who were enslaved, it tied it to the enslavers and the auctioning of people.

Chair Greene said they would begin with "this was," in that case.

Dr. Fraser said "this was" seemed to him a waste of wording, but he understood that they needed to not have fragments.

Mr. McCormack said that if they used "enslaved people" at the beginning, it would be repeated in the following sentence.

Mr. Butler suggested that instead of trying to rewrite the sentence then, that they glance at the rest of the text, as there might have been other words that needed to be changed. It was possible that it simply needed to go back to the State Archive for general editing. For example, on that same side, lines 13-15, "this lot was originally an alleyway." He said that it was actually originally Charles Pinckney's house in the 18th century, which later burned in a fire and then became an alleyway. It was therefore not "originally" an alleyway, so that sentence was misleading.

Chair Greene said that eliminating that portion of the text would free up space for additional wording in the first sentence. Further, since the lot was on Chalmers Street, he did not think it was necessary to include "on Chalmers Street" in the text. "This lot was once an alleyway" would have been historically correct and free up some characters.

Ms. Mack said the State needed to come to terms with the language and decide on whether they were going to use the term "slave" or the term "enslaved."

Mr. McCormack said it could be both.

Ms. Mack said that was true, but she believed the location of each term should have been more consistent.

Chair Greene said they could make those recommendations in a motion to be considered by the State.

Chair Greene asked if they wanted to do separate motions for each side, or one at a time. In other words, he wanted to know if there were many issues in side 2.

Dr. Fraser said that he had similar corrections on side 2. He suggested the use of "Enslavement Pen."

Chair Greene suggested a motion: to suggest to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History and its sponsor, the Old Slave Mart Museum City of Charleston, to consider amending the signs so that the first sentence on side 1 suggested that the site was one of the sites where enslaved people were sold in the City of Charleston, and to correct errors in lines 13 and 14. "Chalmers Street" could be omitted to save space, and the site was once an alleyway, but not "originally." On side 2, line 2, the Commission respectfully suggested that "large slave pen" be changed to "enslavement pen."

Mr. Butler said the word "pen" had caught his attention. He was unsure exactly what it was. Was it a holding pen? A fenced area? He had heard that phrase many times before, but was not certain what it referred to, exactly.

Chair Greene said he thought it was technically a barracoon. If they changed the language there, then that would change the name of the sign on Queen Street.

Mr. Butler said he understood that it was colloquially known as a "slave pen," but did not feel it was descriptive for the purposes of elucidating the public. It was a holding facility.

Chair Greene asked if he would suggest putting the word "holding" in front of "pen."

Mr. Butler said that he would perhaps consider that on the first plaque. However, on the plaque to be called "Slave Pen," he understood that those were the words used at the time, and so there was some legitimacy there, as well.

Dr. Fraser said that "enslavement pen" made it clear that it was a structure set up to try to enslave people. It did not relate to the people, but to the actor who created the "pen."

Chair Greene said that he thought Mr. Butler was suggesting "enslavement holding pen."

Dr. Fraser said they could put "pen" in italics or quotation marks, but it needed to be clarified that the people were not "slaves."

Mr. McCormack said that they were slaves.

Dr. Fraser said that one could call them "slaves," and one could talk about that as their social status, but looking at them through the lens they were using, one had to say that it was not the enslaved people they were talking about, but the people who acted to create the pen.

He said he was suggesting that the Archives use the word and concept of "enslavement," rather than the calumny of the word "slave" as attached to those who were enslaved.

Chair Greene asked if it would be understandable if "pen" was changed to "area."

Dr. Fraser said he would use the word "pen" in quotation marks, since that was what they actually called it, because, in their minds, they had reduced the people to farm animals.

Chair Greene asked Mr. Butler's thoughts.

Mr. Butler said he agreed with much of what Dr. Fraser had said, in that it was a historic term that caused discomfort today, and had lost the historic meaning that it had more than 150 years ago. He did not think it was a bad idea to use quotation marks. He thought it was worth encouraging the State to put it in quotation marks to distance itself from the terminology that had been commonly used in the past.

He said that earlier, he had said that Charles Pinckney had had a house on the site, but he had been mistaken. The backdoor of the house once faced the alley. However, he still thought the wording of "was once an alley" was good, as it cut down on characters to save a few spaces.

Chair Greene asked if they would use "Enslavement 'Pen,'" with "pen" in quotation marks, or leave it in 19th century parlance in quotation marks as "Slave Pen."

Dr. Fraser said he would not accept the second solution. "Enslavement" related to the act of actually attempting to enslave a person, which was why the enclosures were created. He wanted to use "enslavement," with quotations around "pen."

Mr. McCormack asked if they would be using the words "enslaved people" twice, in two sentences. That was not how they had wordsmithed text in the past. He said he would be shocked if that was the case. The first sentence would say "public auctions of enslaved people." The second sentence would say "banned auctions of enslaved people." He said that from a writing point of view, that was "stupid." That was why they had and used synonyms, and why they didn't change everything every time a word came up. He thought the Archives recognized that, because in one case, they used "slave," and the next time, they used "enslaved people."

Dr. Fraser said he had proposed "of the enslaved," rather than "enslaved people," because it was shorter.

Mr. McCormack said it was still the same word.

Dr. Fraser said he wasn't using "enslaved people," because they knew they were people, but they were enslaved. Noting that they were "enslaved" seemed sufficient to him.

Chair Greene clarified that it would be "public auctions of the enslaved."

Dr. Fraser said that was correct.

Chair Greene read aloud the proposed sentences. It read: "This was one of Charleston's sites for the public of auction of the enslaved. In 1856, Thomas Ryan opened a slave trading complex here after the City banned auctions of enslaved people and other goods." They could take out the word "Old," since the Exchange Building was only now called the "Old Exchange." He was suggesting the cuts to give more room for additional language. He continued: "The complex known as "the Mart" or "Ryan's Mart" moved from here to Queen Street." The lot was once an alleyway. "In 1859, the Mart's second owner covered the alley and converted it into a formal auction space." He said there seemed to be some duplication.

He asked if one instance of "enslaved people" could be changed to "enslaved African Americans," which may have created less redundancy.

They could also suggest to the State Archives that when items come back to the History Commission, the issues discussed were the ones that they wanted addressed. They could also say that they wanted the people who would be presenting the plaque to deal with the duplication of language. He asked if that would work. He said they wanted to use the term "enslavement" and not "enslaved."

Dr. Fraser said he did not want to use the term "slave" to refer to people, and he did not want to use the word "slave" as an adjective.

Mr. McCormack said it was a noun, not an adjective.

Chair Greene said that it would be an adjective in the context of a sentence like "slave sales."

Dr. Fraser said a "slave auction" would use "slave" as an adjective.

Ms. Mack said they had talked about a "slave pen," which used it as an adjective. She said that at some point, they should dedicate a meeting to resolving the issue for the Commission, because it was going to come up over and over again as they considered future monuments and language. She said she agreed that the folks in Columbia were terrific, and knew a lot of their stuff, but nobody was perfect. They needed to come up with a solution for the plaques and markers in the City of Charleston.

Chair Greene said that he liked that idea. That way, when people came to the Commission, they could tell them what language would be appropriate. He did not think the current meeting was the time to do it, however.

Mr. McCormack said he did not know what country he was in, with people trying to dictate what language was being used.

Chair Greene said they would be more like guidelines, where a submission would be more liable to get approval from the Commission if they met them.

He said he thought that their suggestion should be that the State Archives rewrite the plaque noting the following points: that the first sentence should note that this was one of the many auction sites in the City of Charleston, and that they should not use the word “slave” as an adjective or a noun. It should be replaced with “enslaved people” or similar language. The Commissioners also suggested that it was not “originally” an alley, but “once” an alley. He further suggested on side 2 that it not be called a “slave pen,” but an “enslavement ‘pen,’” with “pen” in quotation marks.

He asked if he had summed up the discussion.

Mr. Butler said that in the very first sentence in recommendations to the State, they should note that that Ryan’s Mart was the principal mart during that 7-year time period. It was not “a principal site” it was “one of the principal sites,” not just simply “one of the many sale sites.”

Mr. Theiling asked if the Exchange Building was ever called “the Old Exchange Building,” as a proper noun with all three words, or if they were trying to refer to the “Old Exchange” in its form as a building, which would leave “building” uncapitalized.

Chair Greene said it was now called the “Old Exchange Building.” They could further suggest that all such things were taken care of. He said they could do one motion now, or they could also build Mr. Theiling’s request into a second motion dealing specifically with the other side.

Mr. Theiling said that would be fine.

On the motion of Angela Mack, seconded by Wilmot Fraser, the Commission voted to recommend to the State Archives the following:

1. That the first sentence should note that the site was “a principal site,” rather than “the principal site.”
2. That the site was not “originally” an alleyway, but was “once” an alleyway.
3. That uses of the word “slave” should be removed in favor of words such as “enslaved people,” “the enslaved,” or similar, both in noun and in adjective form.
4. That side 2 not be titled “Slave Pen,” but rather: Enslavement “Pen.”

The vote was not unanimous. David McCormack voted against the motion.

Chair Greene said they should also suggest to the State Archives that they look at how the Old Exchange should be referred to.

c. “Slave Pen” Marker

Ms. Mack said she wanted an explanation as to why “pen” was being used. She asked why it would be appropriate for the title of the plaque.

Dr. Fraser said it was because they were talking about the area behind the “Mart” building, where the enslaved were confined.

Ms. Mack said she appreciated that explanation, but she was trying to put herself in the shoes of an individual who was visiting Charleston, and trying to understand the markers and what they meant. She asked if it was actually called a “slave pen.”

Dr. Fraser said that it was.

Ms. Mack said she thought it was called “the Mart,” or “Ryan’s Mart.”

Chair Greene asked if Tony Youmans wanted to weigh in.

Dr. Fraser said he thought they were talking about separate parts.

Ms. Mack said she wanted to figure out if the official name was “slave pen,” or if it was descriptive.

Dr. Fraser said it was both descriptive and probably the use of the time because it was meant to be an area of confinement, though not a jail. He said that area allowed people more room to move around, probably more than they were allowed to in a jail cell.

Mr. Butler said he understood and agreed with Ms. Mack. It was not clear from the text of the plaque if that term was used during the operation of Ryan's Mart. The author of the text had taken the trouble to put in quotation marks "sick house," to indicate to the reader that that was what it was called during Ryan's time. He said that if they actually used the term "slave pen," then that needed to be in quotation marks, as well.

Dr. Fraser said he agreed.

Mr. Butler said he felt it might have been too much to ask readers to understand, as it said in line 11, that "this was a large slave pen." That was not a common phrase in the 21st century.

Ms. Mack said that was correct. She asked what that meant in today's world. She asked what it would mean to a child reading the plaque.

Ms. Mitchell of the Old Slave Mart Museum said she had been listening in. She said that in addressing the term "sick house," from what she had read, it was called a "dead-house" or a "morgue." She had personally preferred that term, but she said Dr. Breeden had said he preferred a "lighter" term.

Mr. Butler said that was a misrepresentation.

Ms. Mack agreed.

Ms. Mitchell said she personally preferred calling it what it was called at the time, which was a "dead-house" or a "morgue," which were terms printed in the old newspaper from 1950 they had used when the area was being condemned as a slum by the Health Department.

Chair Greene asked if there was anything that called it a dead-house at the time. The Bancroft article used "slave pen," but not in quotation marks.

Ms. Mitchell said the word "slave pen" was all she had seen.

Chair Greene said that, for those who did not know, Ms. Mitchell was a long-term interpreter at the Slave Mart Museum. She was a distinguished historical researcher. He had often seen her in the archives looking up 19th century documents, and trying to actually get the 19th century in the 19th century's own words.

He asked the Commission what they were suggesting. They could be as specific or as general as they wanted. Could they cleave to original language as much as possible? Was there 19th century terminology for the sites? He said it would end on Queen Street. That was where Ryan's Jail stood flush on the street. The Mart was on Chalmers Street. The void in between, where the dead-house or sick house was, he assumed that was what was called the "pen." It was the area that was not built upon that could not be exited. The center between the Mart on Chalmers and Ryan's Jail on Queen was the "slave pen." Calling it the "pen" was referencing the middle of the block, as they stood where Ryan's Jail was, which was referenced in the text. He asked if it made more sense to call the "pen" "Ryan's Jail."

Mr. Butler said he liked the suggestion.

Ms. Mack agreed. She thought it avoided the situation entirely, and was much more accurate.

Ms. Mitchell agreed.

Dr. Fraser said that, according to the plaque, it said "sometimes sold at Ryan's Jail, a four story brick double house near here on Queen Street." The jail was a separate building. The area referenced was used to prepare for sale, and to hold people pending things. He was looking at lines 14-18, which described where Ryan's Jail was.

Chair Greene said that looking at the PDF that was sent of the aerial view of where the plaque would be, it was essentially standing slightly to the west of the confines, but he was unsure.

Dr. Fraser said the text did not say “next door,” but “near here,” which was not at all specific.

Chair Greene said that with the “Pen” title, the description was trying to describe the entire complex, which was a word that was used in the text.

Dr. Fraser said that was exactly right. They were talking about a portion of the complex.

Chair Greene said that even the first sentence kind of contradicted the title. “From 1956-1863, this was the site of a slave trading complex, known as ‘The Mart’ or ‘Ryan’s Mart.’”

Dr. Fraser said the words “slave trading complex” should have been changed to “enslaving trading complex.”

Mr. McCormack said he had a fundamental question. He asked why they were doing two plaques for one thing.

Ms. Mack said that was a great question.

Chair Greene said it was because they would be on two different streets.

Mr. McCormack said he understood that, but it seemed to him that there only needed to be one plaque if they were saying the same information.

Chair Greene asked Ms. Mitchell if she had any thoughts on why they wanted to mark both sites.

Ms. Mitchell said it was for visitors or people walking down Queen Street to know that the vacant parking lot was a site where enslaved people were jailed, fed, and sadly, some might have died there, and where they were sold. The lot itself was private property.

Chair Greene asked if it would be inappropriate to give side 2 the same title, instead of “Slave Pen,” which would unify it, so that people on either street would see it as all part of the same complex, but each would talk about different parts. They hadn’t been able to decide on a title. He said that Mr. McCormack was correct in that it was the same site.

Ms. Mack agreed. It was the same site, so they should have had the same title.

Mr. McCormack asked why they needed two markers for one site.

Chair Greene said it was because it extended a city block, and one could not be seen from the other.

Mr. McCormack said that if that were the case, then it seemed like they needed to erect more markers for other sites. He said he was only asking because they seemed to be “floundering around.”

Chair Greene said that the text was significantly different from one to the other. If needed, they could suggest that the differences be made clearer. He asked if the Commissioners had suggestions beyond the title.

Ms. Mack said she was not trying to be problematic, but she was trying to look at the item from the standpoint of the visitors, and help them to understand what they were looking at. She thought that the description of the pen should have been created within the text of the plaque, but most people would not understand what the word “pen” meant when used as the title. She wanted the Archives to reconsider, and use the same title for the titles of both plaques so that there was an understanding of the relationship across the block. If the word “pen” was used, then there should have been an appropriate description so that people understood what it was.

She said the word “jail” was often used as a synonym for “pen.” She asked if “jail” would have been better to use, and if it was different.

Dr. Fraser said it was different.

Ms. Mack said they assumed criminality when a person was in a “jail,” as opposed to being in a holding place.

Dr. Fraser said that a jail was a structure set up to confine a person to a specific area, usually with very strict limits. He said that a pen was less strict. It allowed some movement, but still confined them. That was why he thought it was broken down into its component parts, as there were various areas that attended to specific

aspects of carrying out the trade of human beings. He thought it could be resolved through the use of “pen” in quotation marks. He used “enslavement” because they were talking about the act that was being perpetrated upon people, not the people themselves. He proposed the following language: “from 1856-1863, this was the site of an enslavement trading complex known as the Mart or Ryan’s Mart. Opened by Thomas Ryan, it extended south to a lot on Chalmers Street that became its main salesroom. Prior to auction, enslaved people were held, prepped, and inspected in a large enslavement “pen” formed by high brick walls connecting the north and south ends of the complex. The enslaved were also confined and sometimes sold at Ryan’s Jail...” He said Ryan’s jail was probably an area with more strict control over interior space. “...a four story brick double house near here on Queen Street.” That resolved any problems in reference to slavery and enslavement, for him. If “pen” was in quotation marks and there was some historical reference to the term being commonly used, as one would have pens for a lot of stock, then that word would have been appropriate.

Mr. Butler said that the building that had been torn down in 1950 was identified in 1950 as 17 to 19 Queen Street, which was the exact site where the marker was proposed to go. It did not need to say “a four story building near here,” it was right there.

Chair Greene said photographs survived.

Dr. Fraser said that it should be designated as being there, not “near” there. He proposed simply “here on Queen Street.”

Chair Greene said he wanted to go back to the larger title. He said Dr. Fraser was suggesting “Enslavement ‘Pen.’” He asked how that sat with the other Commissioners.

Mr. Butler said he preferred Chair Greene’s thought that the title should have been the same for both markers.

Chair Greene asked if that meant he preferred “Ryan’s Mart.”

Mr. Butler said that was correct.

Mr. Theiling said that since they were speaking about two markers for the same complex, and they were allowed two lines for the title, then in both cases they could title the markers “Enslavement Complex,” and the second line could be given the name of the street, like “the Queen Street Aspect.”

Ms. Mack said that was a good thought.

Chair Greene said one could even have said “Ryan’s Mart” or “The Mart” with the second lines being “North End” and “South End.”

Mr. Theiling said north and south would only be useful for people who knew where they were. The name of the street would be more specific.

Ms. Mack agreed. She thought it was a great solution. It joined the entire complex, which was spoken about in both plaques.

Dr. Fraser said he tended to agree. He suggested “Enslavement Complex” on both sides.

Ms. Mack said that made much more sense.

Dr. Fraser said they could talk about it all together, instead of as Ryan’s Mart on the Chalmers Street plaque, and the “pen” on the Queen Street side.

Ms. Mack said it would help people understand the size of the site. If the titles were same, and the streets identified, it would give people a sense of what they were looking at as far as scope was concerned. She had been struggling with it since she had seen it, and had not been able to express what was wrong until then.

Chair Greene said he thought it was an elegant solution.

Ms. Mack said that everything else would then make sense. She said it would still be helpful to describe what a “pen” was. She did not think people would understand the difference between a “pen” and a “jail.” She did not think she understood the difference between the two, based upon the conversation.

Mr. McCormack said she must not have watched a lot of cowboy movies. There were horse pens everywhere. He felt most people would understand what a “pen” was.

Ms. Mack said she didn’t think that was the case when the word was said in the same breath as the word “jail,” particularly when speaking of humans, as opposed to animals.

Mr. McCormack said that if they wanted people to understand how terrible slavery was, then they should have wanted people to understand that that was exactly how they were being treated. It would have been much more dramatic to use the term “slave pen.”

Ms. Mack said that in that case, she would consider using the word “holding” in front of “pen.”

Mr. McCormack said a “holding pen” was a jail term.

Mr. McCormack said people were not dumb enough to not know what a pen was.

Chair Greene said they had to go to the lowest common denominator.

Mr. McCormack said that they would then have to remove some of the larger words, in that case.

Chair Greene proposed the following “the enslaved people were held, prepped, and inspected in a large open area or ‘pen,’ formed by high brick walls connecting the north and south ends of the Mart.” He said he thought using “open area” or “unenclosed area” would solve the problem of people not understanding the meaning of “pen.”

Mr. McCormack said that it was an enclosed area.

Chair Greene said that it was open to the sky.

Mr. McCormack said it was true that it was open air, but it was enclosed.

Chair Greene asked if they wanted to talk about the “sick house.”

Ms. Mitchell said she would have preferred if they used the terms “dead-house” or “morgue.”

Chair Greene asked Ms. Mitchell if they had ever used it as a hospital.

Ms. Mitchell said they knew they put people that were sick there, but they did not know if a doctor was called.

Chair Greene asked if there was a contemporary description, during slavery, of what it was called, because “dead-house” and “morgue” only appeared later.

Ms. Mitchell said they did not have a contemporary description. The map she had seen only had the word “store.”

Mr. Theiling said they had the use of three words. They could use both “sick house” and “morgue” or “dead-house.” Imagining the situation, the people there would have been in horrible circumstances. Some would have been sick, and in a short amount of time, they would die. It must have been both.

Ms. Mitchell said that would have been fine, as well.

Mr. Butler said that was a good solution, as well, space permitting it. He also wanted to bring up the idea of the term “jail” being put in quotation marks, because it was not a legal jail, it was simply functioning as a sort of jail.

Chair Greene said they did have it in quotes on side 1.

Mr. Butler said it was not on side 2.

Dr. Fraser said it was side 2, line 11.

Mr. Butler said people were living in the jail in the 1950s.

Chair Greene said that on lines 8 and 9, the buildings were not made into tenements “for” African Americans, but rather became tenements inhabited by African Americans. He said he would try to look in the City Directory about it. From his understanding, they were not like Catfish Row, with one family in each room. Looking at the City Directory, they were listing only one or two people in the building. The tenements were rental properties, but not specifically for African Americans. They were turned into rental properties that ended up being inhabited by African Americans. He said that everyone on the south side of the block was mostly African American, with some few white people. Getting closer to Meeting Street, there were more and more white people.

He said language had the power to misrepresent things, even when one was trying earnestly to correctly represent something.

He asked if there were any further issues.

No one asked to speak.

Chair Greene said that it seemed that they were suggesting the following to the State Archives and the Old Slave Mart Museum:

1. To change the titles on both sites to “Enslavement Complex” on the first line, with the second lines being “Chalmers Street” and “Queen Street.”
2. Calling it large open area or “enslavement ‘pen,’” as opposed to “slave pen.”
3. The word “near” in reference to the four story brick building was unnecessary.
4. They strongly encouraged the use of the words for all of the possible uses for the middle of the block, including “dead-house” and “sick house.”
5. To put “jail” in quotation marks.
6. That it became tenements “inhabited by,” but not “for,” African Americans.

He asked if there was anything else they wanted to suggest.

Dr. Fraser asked if there were any other groups of people besides African Americans that lived in those units.

Chair Greene said the directories were imperfect. He had checked five or six years, and even if a person was not listed as “colored,” he looked them up in the “name” directory, and all were designated “C” for “colored.” He had also done an oral history with someone who had lived there in the 40s, and he was told that only African Americans had lived there at that time, but that was all he knew. He said they could have that checked.

Dr. Fraser said that the sentence read “the Mart buildings later became tenements, portions of which African Americans occupied for decades.” African Americans were therefore not occupying the entire building, which was why he asked the questions.

Chair Greene said he had only checked the Queen Street side, but they could add that to the suggestions. However, the record would not be infallible.

Dr. Fraser said he understood, but wanted as accurate a description as possible.

Chair Greene reiterated the suggestions they had made.

On the motion of Chair Harlan Greene, seconded by Wilmot Fraser, the Commission voted to recommend the following to the State Archives and the Old Slave Mart Museum:

1. That the titles be changed on both plaques to say “Enslavement Trading Complex” on the first line, and the street name on the second.
2. That “enslavement ‘pen,’” “pen” in quotation marks, be used in place of “slave pen.”
3. That the word “near” be removed such that the text read only “brick double-house here.”
4. That uses of the words “dead-house” and “sick house” be included.
5. That all uses of the word “jail” be enclosed in quotation marks.
6. That it be made clear that the tenements were not explicitly “for” African Americans, merely inhabited by them.

7. That demographics of those who lived in the tenements be confirmed.

The vote was not unanimous. David McCormack voted against the motion.

d. Revolutionary Charleston 250 Initiative

Chair Greene asked if there were any questions about the information submitted by America 250.

Mr. McCormack said he thought someone from the History Commission should have been on the board.

Chair Greene said he could email Mr. Scarlett about that. He asked if Mr. McCormack was volunteering.

Mr. McCormack said, "Not necessarily."

Mr. Theiling asked if the project had originated with Ken Scarlett.

Chair Greene said the emails came from him. He was not in town and could not come to present, and it was for information only. The letter did call for Mr. Butler or his "designee," so Mr. Butler could represent the History Commission, as well. He assumed "CoC" meant "College of Charleston."

Mr. Theiling said he was familiar with Ken Scarlett's work. There had been an annual observance of what he called "Victory Day" for several years. He thought it would be a good start for what was proposed.

Chair Greene said it was only presented for information, which he assumed meant that there might at some point be a plaque that came to the Commission about the Revolution. He said Mr. Scarlett wanted them to know that the project was out there and in the works, and that they may be seeing more signs about the Revolution, which he welcomed.

Dr. Fraser said that some years ago, he was on the board of the YMCA. They had taken a sojourn to a retreat complex near McClellanville. He remembered seeing on the wall of the main reading room there a large painting of the Battle of Cowpens, which showed an African American patriot on horseback with a pistol, fighting for the colonial side. He had not been doing much reading around the Revolutionary War, but he asked to what extent African Americans participated in the Revolution. He understood that many did, some at the behest of their so-called "masters," who were promised freedom and such, and were re-enslaved after the cessation of hostilities. That was a story he was anxious to explore. He asked what had happened to the African Americans who had formed such a large population in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. He asked how they acted and were acted upon. He understood that some had gone up to Newfoundland.

Mr. McCormack said it had been Nova Scotia.

Chair Greene said there was a whole book on the subject.

Ms. Mack said it was a great book.

Dr. Fraser said he wanted to make sure they explored the African American aspect of the story completely and used it as source material.

Chair Greene said he thought it was a great idea. He said there had also been paintings of Black Hessians, so there had been Blacks on both sides. He said suggesting that to Ken Scarlett was a good idea. They could also suggest it as the Commission.

Mr. Butler said he knew Ken Scarlett personally, and he told Dr. Fraser to ask him that same question. He said Mr. Scarlett would have loved to tell him about the African American gentleman with the pistol in that painting. He knew that story, and it was one of his favorite stories to tell. He said Mr. Scarlett was very cognizant of the need to bring up the African American participation on both sides of the War. Mr. Butler would be working on stories like that in the coming years, as there were many stories that had not yet been told.

He said it was his first time hearing about the America 250 Initiative, and he was curious what a "Dickens Village" was.

Chair Greene said he thought it was a collectible, such as “snow babies.”

Mr. Butler asked if they were souvenirs.

Chair Greene said they were something like that.

He asked if they wanted to put on the next meeting the beginning of a discussion about suggested language or guidelines for those who would be presenting signs. They didn't have to settle it at the same meeting.

Dr. Fraser said he thought that people were taking the initiative for reasons that they best understood to send material and projects to the Commission. Therefore, it was probably wiser for them to consult with them after they had proposed something, instead of trying to circumscribe their thinking and expression before it was extant.

Mr. McCormack said he agreed 100%.

Mr. Theiling agreed. They should not have been controlling, but reactive to the interests of the applicant.

Mr. McCormack said that otherwise, they would be getting into [Orwellian] “newspeak.”

Ms. Mack said she heard what they were saying, and that she stood corrected. Her concern was that they seemed to talk about the same words over and over again, but that may have been important for each individual marker, without creating guidelines that required people to bend to them.

Chair Greene said he agreed, and said they also shouldn't stay away from the possibility recommending that proposals be made in complete sentences, that their facts were checked, and that they could request that language be used sensitively, etc.

Ms. Mack said that they all appreciated the people at the Department of Archives, but they could not know everything. Collectively, the Commission knew a lot.

Chair Greene said there were very few errors of fact in what they had talked about. Most of what they had spoken about was language, interpretation, and trying to figure out how to present it to people who essentially knew nothing, people who were young enough or unengaged enough that they weren't aware that the Civil War ended in 1865, and that kind of thing.

4. **Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Philip Clapper
Clerk of Council's Office