

**TUMWATER HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF HYBRID MEETING  
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**CONVENE:** 6:31 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Chair David Shipley and Commissioners Dave Nicandri, Rob Paylor, Alex Rossiter, Renee Radcliff Sinclair, and Don Trosper.

Excused: Commissioner Marnie Slakey.

Staff: Parks and Recreation Department Director Chuck Denney and Facilities Manager Chris Graham.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA:** Election of Chair and Vice Chair was added to the agenda.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING APRIL 18, 2024:** A correction was requested to the second sentence of the fourth paragraph on page seven to reflect, "McFarland is prepared to walk through the form."

**MOTION:** Chair Shipley moved, seconded by Commissioner Rossiter, to approve the April 18, 2024 minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.

**ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR:** *Commissioner Nicandri nominated David Shipley as Chair and Alex Rossiter as Vice Chair during 2025. Commissioner Trosper seconded the nomination.*

**MOTION:** By a unanimous vote, Commissioner Shipley was elected to serve as the 2025 Chair and Commissioner Rossiter was elected to serve as the 2025 Vice Chair.

**HISTORIC TRAILS AND ROADWAYS:** Commissioner Nicandri presented the proposed Tumwater Historic Trails and Highways Signage project.

Commissioner Nicandri acknowledged the assistance of Ms. Kemery in developing the presentation materials. He thanked several historians for their assistance, his son who traveled with him extensively, and Director Denney for providing the resources to develop the presentation.

The story of trails and historic roadways in Tumwater begins with George Bush, a pioneer traveling with Michael T. Simmons and others who established the area that became modern Tumwater in 1845. Settlers in the

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Oregon Territory passed a law that did not allow African Americans to settle in Oregon. George Bush, as an African American, and his traveling party decided to continue north of the Columbia River to an area located outside the jurisdiction of the provisional government of Oregon. They eventually settled in an area they called New Market as they traveled along the Cowlitz Trail.

Commissioner Nicandri shared a series of township plat maps produced by the Government Land Office in the early 1850s. The maps essentially carved up the public domain; however, the federal government had not secured title of the lands from the various tribes in Washington Territory at that time. The government began individually distributing six-mile square township plats throughout the territory. A copy of an 1853 plat map identified the route of the Cowlitz Trail. The map depicts Olympia as an area three streets wide and eight streets long in 1853. Tumwater is located to the south of Olympia at the tip of Budd Inlet. The map also identifies the Cowlitz Trail across the terrain. By adding all the maps together, it is possible to extract the specific township range of the original trail.

Dave Welch, a nationally known surveyor and mapmaker with the Oregon California Trail Association, overlaid the Oregon Trail data with a modern map of historic Highway 99. The Cowlitz Trail crossed Highway 99 several hundred feet north of 93<sup>rd</sup> Avenue at the southern limit of City of Tumwater.

The Davis Meeker oak tree off Old Highway 99 was a recognized as a landmark on the Cowlitz/Oregon Trail. At the location of the oak tree, the trail begins to divert and runs along the modern configuration of Old Highway 99.

The Cowlitz Trail as it traveled along the airport diverted and followed the route of Bonniewood Drive past Peter G. Schmidt Elementary School. The trail then continued to Trosper Road and west of present day I-5 near Michael T. Simmons Elementary School and then proceeded back to the Tumwater Falls area. The trail ended at Tumwater Falls. In the 1850s, a bridge was built across the Deschutes River near the site of the current Boston Street Bridge.

The Cowlitz Trail segment of the Oregon Trail has been well established. A federal study conducted by the National Parks Service has recommended its inclusion in the National Historic Trail for the Oregon Trail system. However, the process is complicated and requires an act of Congress to amend the National Trail. Congress continues to experience trouble focusing on many issues and the trail is just one of those issues. However, the trail is included on the National Parks Service agenda to include adding the Cowlitz Trail segment to the National Historic Trail or the Oregon Trail system. If, and when the route is designated, the action would

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include adding signage depicting that part of the Oregon Trail along the I-5 corridor north of Vancouver, Washington through Cowlitz County, Lewis County, Thurston County, and Tumwater. Until the official designation by Congress, the proposal is to install interim signs.

Commissioner Nicandri shared examples of a graphic image of a temporary sign denoting the historic trail. The image utilizes the City's former logo with some amendments featuring George Bush, an African American, and his wife Isabella standing over the Tumwater Falls. He identified numerous locations for placement of signs.

The proposal also incorporates Washington State highway signs of the original State Road 1, which extended from Vancouver, Washington to Blaine and to the Canadian border. In 1927, when the federal highway system was created, parts of State Road 1 were overlaid with U.S. Highway 99 or Old Highway 99 signs. Commissioner Nicandri shared an example of the proposed sign design for recognizing historic Route 1 by featuring the silhouette of President George Washington with "1" centered within the silhouette and "Washington" along the bottom of the silhouette. He reviewed different areas within the City for placement of the signs based on roadway alignments in 1922. He described how roads over time were realigned especially after the construction of Interstate 5.

*Recording of the meeting inadvertently stopped at 7:05 p.m.*

**2025  
DEPARTMENT  
PROJECTS:**

Director Denney briefed members on future park and trail construction, Crosby House improvements, Brewmaster's House completion, and the relocation of the Parks and Recreation office.

**NEXT MEETING  
DATE:**

The next meeting is scheduled on April 17, 2025.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Chair Shipley adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
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