



STATE PRESERVATION BOARD

The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor, Chairman
The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor, Co-Vice Chairman
The Honorable Joe Straus, Speaker of the House, Co-Vice Chairman
The Honorable Lois Kolkhorst, Texas Senate
The Honorable Charlie Geren, Texas House of Representatives
Alethea Swann Bugg, Citizen Board Member
Rod Welsh, Executive Director

April 11, 2018

Mr. Ken Levine, Director
Sunset Advisory Commission
P. O. Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711-3066

Dear Mr. Levine:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Texas Historical Commission Sunset Staff Report you forwarded on March 28, 2018. The State Preservation Board (SPB) is especially interested in providing feedback about two issues that will directly affect this agency as we continue to manage our four historic properties: Capitol Square, the Capitol Visitors Center, the Governor's Mansion and the State Cemetery. We respect the other three state agencies that manage historic properties--the Texas Historical Commission (THC), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Texas General Land Office (GLO)--and appreciate our many collaborations over the years.

Although history unites these four agencies, the SPB historic sites are unique in that they serve important clientele who are predominately elected officials with an expectation of responsiveness as they work for the people of Texas. Capitol Square is a working state office building that contains over a million gross square feet of space that must be maintained at the highest level and interpreted for more than a million visitors annually. The Governor's Mansion is the home for the Governor and his family where a great deal of state business is conducted while it is also shared with visitors. The State Cemetery is hallowed ground for important state leaders and is growing as an interpretive destination. The SPB was created in 1983 to restore the Capitol, preserve it for future generations of Texans and interpret it for our visitors from around the world. Today, the SPB successfully manages all our sites including the Bullock Museum from not only a visitor standpoint, but from an occupant perspective, serving the need for office cleaning, maintenance, artifact interpretation, and guided tours, to note a few key competencies.

The SPB welcomes the opportunity to work with the other three state agencies who manage historic sites to develop a statewide historic sites master plan. Because I am sure that representatives of each of these four agencies would contend that the sites they maintain are the most important to Texas history, I would suggest that a neutral party not connected in any way to the four agencies can be hired to lead the process and guide the four agencies to a solid plan. It would also be best to have funds appropriated by the Legislature to the four agencies to ensure that participation in the planning process does not cause undue hardship in terms of resources including staff hours, research and any necessary travel expenses.

We also appreciate the Sunset Advisory Commission recognizing that agencies with a curatorial collection have a special fiduciary responsibility to the people of Texas. When artifacts from agency collections do not meet policy criteria and can be sold, it would be ideal to not only have the ability to sell items at appropriate state or national auctions to produce maximum price, but also to have all proceeds forwarded to the owning agency for future use. Also, note that if a future curatorial storage facility is created, SPB would like the opportunity to participate as needed if our existing facilities are full.

The SPB has effectively maintained the sites under our purview for 35 years. We hope to work with the THC, TPWD and GLO to develop the plan that will be presented by THC on December 10, 2018 to the Sunset Commission. All four agencies must have a voice in all aspects of planning and execution of a statewide historic sites master plan, or what we each do so effectively may be negatively impacted.

Thank you, again for allowing SPB to provide input. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roderick Welsh". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Roderick Welsh
Executive Director