

# **Rio Colorado Chapter Board Meeting Minutes**

## **Board Meeting**

**September 26, 2023**

Yuma County Main Library

2951 S. 21<sup>st</sup> Drive

Yuma, Arizona 85364

And on Conference Call

1. **Call to Order:** 5:32 pm by Dr. Linda Elliott-Nelson

2. **Roll Call:** Present: Bruce Gwynn, Dr. Linda Elliott-Nelson, Tom Rushin, Betsy Gotsponer, Monica Ketchum-Cardenas, Dr. Ellen Riek, Tom Rush, Emilia Cortez

Absent: Faron Owl, Thelma Lundy, Sue Ann Willen, Sheridan Osborn

Guests: (from the Arizona Historical Society) David Breeckner, Executive Director; Rebekah Percival, Vice President, Library, Archives, Collections and Exhibits; Vince Bradley, Assistant Deputy Director: Vice President for Marketing, Communications, Development and Finance; Jenny Pennington, Museum Educator; and (from the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area) Cathy Douglas, Executive Director; Shelley Mellon, Board Chair

3. **Call to the Public:** No response

4. **Approval of minutes:** Minutes for the June 27, 2023, Rio Colorado Chapter (RCC) Board of Directors meeting were approved. (Tom Rushin, Bruce Gwynn)

5. **President's Remarks:** Dr. Linda Elliott-Nelson thanked everyone for being present and introduced Cathy Douglas and Shelley Mellon from the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area and asked Rebekah Percival to introduce the guests present from the Arizona Historical Society. She then reviewed the RCC 2023-2024 goals and objectives.

a. Support for the design and construction of the Ag Museum in the Molina Block. (These activities progress and were reviewed by the Yuma County Historical Society.)

b. Support for adding an affiliate museum to the Arizona Historical Society Certified Historical Institutions list from the Yuma area.

c. Include at least two student presentations in the upcoming year to RCC and YCHS board meetings. (Dr. Elliott-Nelson thanked Dr. Riek for the excellent presentation by Mily Canela, which was greatly appreciated by the board and noted that future student presentations were anticipated.)

d. Research including a video presentation from a history expert that could be available and accessible to the public.

e. Research conducting a project providing historic plaques for buildings in Yuma that have not yet received historic plaques. (This goal will be discussed during this meeting by Tom Rushin.)

f. Research providing a lunch and speech in the Sanguinetti House and Gardens Museum area for tourist buses passing through Yuma.

g. Research conducting a scavenger hunt including places around Yuma downtown that are historical.

h. Research putting together a walking tour for downtown historic Yuma.

Discussion: Tom Rushin presented on his initial research regarding historic plaques in downtown Yuma. He mentioned that there are 27 historic and contributing structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Brinley Avenue Historic District, and the vast majority of existing plaques in downtown Yuma are located on these structures. Additionally, Tom stated that there are 16 additional commercial properties listed on the National Register, and some of them also have plaques. He also stated that there are 27 residential properties listed on the National Register, and to date he has not verified that any of them have plaques. The next step in the process will be to verify this information.

Cathy Douglas, Executive Director of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area asked about new properties to nominate and observed that the National Park Service has grants that cover research on historic plaques. She will look into this.

Tom Rush mentioned that the Main Street merchants are interested in the historic plaque goal and would like to collaborate with RCC and YCHS on this activity.

Jenny Pennington shared that there had been a walking tour book worked on by her and Yanna Kruse that included history on the various buildings downtown and that this could be shared on this goal.

Monica Ketchum-Cardenas added that she attended the National Council for History Education's Rural Call to Action meeting during the summer of 2023 at the University of Oklahoma and there are grants for up to \$25K through the Library of Congress. These are grants that focus on teaching with primary sources and these are grants that require collaboration.

**Future Meeting Dates:** Dr. Elliott-Nelson asked if the fourth Tuesday of the month at the Yuma County Main Library was a good date for Rio Colorado Chapter Board meetings. There was consensus on this timing. She noted that the RCC Board meeting minutes and agendas would include the meeting dates through June 2024.

6. Collaboration: Bruce Gwynn shared that there are several groups that are interested in collaborating to focus on branding for "Old Yuma". These include the mayor's office in the City of Yuma, the downtown merchants, the Rio Colorado Chapter Board, the Yuma County Historical Society Board, and the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Board. This branding area of "Old Yuma" would include 8<sup>th</sup> Street to the river, the Quechan reservation, the East and West Wetlands Park area and down to 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Bruce noted that the border between the United States and Mexico used to be 1<sup>st</sup> Street and added that Yuma history is old and unique and predates Jamestown. He hopes to put a committee together to promote "Old Yuma". Cathy Douglas added that she met with a group on 9/25/23 on the potential regional effort for collaborating on this topic and that it is a long-term endeavor. The City of Yuma offered the "Uniquely Yuma" brand that could be added to for consistency in this branding. Bruce mentioned that he would like to form an active committee that could offer

classes in “Yuma 101” that would include interesting information for employees in the area that could learn about Yuma and could share this information with tourists and visitors.

**7. Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area:** Cathy Douglas, Executive Director of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (YCNHA), shared that the YCNHA was designated in 2000 by the U.S. Congress. The YCNHA worked with the City of Yuma to develop the riverfront including Gateway Park, the East and West Wetlands Parks, the Hilton Garden Inn and Home 2 Suites, as well as Main Street improvements in Yuma. YCNHA has collaborated in the past with RCC and YCHS through storing artifacts in the old Yuma City Hall basement, helping to update Sanguinetti House Museum facilities and exhibits, and Molina Block planning. Since 2009, YCNHA has been managing the Yuma Territorial Prison, and the Colorado River Historic State Park. The YCNHA continues to be very involved in supporting projects in this area, including a new project at West Wetlands to add 65 parking spaces, shade ramadas, and landscaping, and a \$450K grant project to build a new nature park in East Wetlands by the PAAC. YCNHA receives \$150K from the City of Yuma for the Colorado River Historic State Park, and this year \$750K is being invested by Arizona State Parks to plan for capital improvement and historic preservation projects in anticipation of \$5.9 million slated for project development at the Yuma Territorial Prison beginning in FY2025. Additional projects being considered at the state parks include new bathrooms which are especially needed at the Yuma Territorial Prison. YCNHA is hiring a development expert out of Tempe, AZ to support downtown development efforts in coordination with the City of Yuma.

YCNHA also focuses on educational outreach to the community including offering free field trips to the two state parks and East Wetlands for fourth graders. Supporting videos and online curricula are in development to extend this programming beyond Yuma.

There are several community and cultural events presented by YCNHA. These include a Día de los Muertos Festival in collaboration with the Chicano Art Collective on 10/21/23 at the Yuma Territorial Prison, Christmas on the Colorado on 12/10/23, the Vintage Baseball League Tournament at the Colorado River State Historic Park (which was held in 2023 and wants to return in March 2024), and the Haru Matsuri Festival on 4/6/24 (which was very popular last year).

The Yuma City Council has put a priority on including a parking garage downtown since parking becomes a premium during downtown Yuma festivals.

Cathy Douglas included that there is interpretive signage downtown that needs to be replaced. The framing for this signage continues to be in good shape and could be reused.

YCNHA is interested in collaborating on creating a downtown walking tour. Jenny Pennington shared that a number of signs have been done and although she doesn't have the equipment for videos, she could collaborate with what she has.

Tom Rush shared that Jacques Istel of Felicity, California, and the Center of the World has funds and might be interested in collaborating on this.

## **6. Announcements and matters for consideration at future board meetings.**

Future meetings: 10/24/23, 11/28/23, December annual meeting at the Sanguinetti House 12/6/23, 1/23/24, 2/27/24, 3/26/24, 4/23/24, 5/28/24, 6/25/24, July/August 2024 summer break – all RCC Board Meetings held at the Yuma Main Library except for those noted as being at the Sanguinetti House.

The RCC Board Meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.

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Dr. Linda Elliott-Nelson, President of the Rio Colorado Chapter Board

The RCC of the Arizona Historical Society does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the administration of its program and services as prescribed by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation such as a sign language interpreter, or alternative formats, by contacting AHS-Yuma at 928-782-1842. Request should be made as early as possible to allow time to arrange for the accommodation.

