



City of Corpus Christi

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corpuschristitx.gov

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Landmark Commission

Thursday, May 28, 2026

4:30 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers.

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chairman Pruitt called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm and a quorum was established to conduct the meeting with Commissioner Espinoza being absent.

Present: 8 - Gordon Landreth, Veronica Wilson, Elizabeth Riggle, Cheryl McLaughlin, Jeff Mumme, Bobby Moreno, Jillian Becquet, and Sondra Meyer

Absent: 1 - Melissa Espinoza

II. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

III. Approval of Absences: Commissioner McLaughlin and Underwood (4.23.2026 meeting)

Vice Chairman Landreth made a motion to approve the absence of Commissioners McLaughlin and Underwood from the April 23, 2026, meeting. Commissioner Riggle seconded. Vote: All Aye. Motion passes.

IV. Approval of Minutes: April 23, 2026 DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Meyer made a motion to accept the April 23, 2026, meeting minutes as presented by staff. Commissioner Riggle seconded. The Vote: All Aye. Motion passed.

1. [26-0774](#) Landmark Commission Meeting Minutes DRAFT 4.23.2026

Attachments: [4.23.2026 LMC DRAFT Minutes](#)

V. 2026 Annual Preservation Awards Ceremony and Art Contest Presentation

Welcome and Opening Remarks:

Chairman Pruitt: "Welcome to the City of Corpus Christi's Annual Preservation Awards, where we celebrate individuals and organizations dedicated to preserving our rich cultural heritage. I am Dr. James Pruitt, Chair of the Corpus Christi Landmark Commission."

Architects and Organizations Category:

Chairman Pruitt: "The first award will be from the Architects and Organizations category

and will be presented by Commissioner and Commissioner Riggle."

Commissioner Riggle: It is a pleasure to be here today as we recognize the preservation work of Architect John Wright. In recognition of outstanding contributions which built the environment and exemplary commitment to preserving, enhancing, and shaping the architectural character of our community. John's vision, leadership, and dedication have established a lasting legacy which will inspire generations to come.

John was passionate about history and preserving and restoring buildings and monuments in the Corpus Christi area. John loved studying history especially the history of Corpus Christi. Some of his most notable works are: Harrison's Landing, North Beach Renovation and Arch Entry, Corpus Christi Cathedral renovation, renovation of the House Schoenstatt Retreat Center in Lamar, TX, and Staples Street Transfer Station which received the prestigious National Endowment of the Arts' Presidential Award under the Clinton Administration.

John was most proud of his renovation of the balustrade which separates uptown and downtown Corpus Christi and "Queen of the Sea" sculpture, fountain, and staircase located on 600 N. Lower Broadway.

John loved to volunteer. Volunteering was the driving force in John's life. His volunteering service included serving on Texas Historical Commission State Board of Review, Corpus Christi Art Commission, chair of the Heart of Corpus Christi Executive Committee, and Nueces County Historical Society and Commission.

Sadly, John left us too soon. John died October 29, 2025. He was 75. Here to receive his award, his wife: Ramona Wright.

Buildings and Properties Category:

Chairman Pruitt: "The second award comes from the Buildings and Properties category. This year we are honoring the Art Museum of South Texas. The award will be presented by Commissioner Jillian Becquet."

Commissioner Becquet's notes on Art Museum

Education Award:

Chairman Pruitt: "Our next category is Education. The Education Award is present to individuals and organizations that promote educating the public on the history of Corpus Christi, the preservation of community resources, or the need for historic preservation in general. We are honoring three individuals and one organization this year. Presenting our first Education Award this evening to Dr. Mark Robbins and Dr. Christine Robbins will be Commissioner Becquet."

Commissioner Becquet's notes on Doctors Robbins

Chairman Pruitt: "Presenting our second Education Award this evening to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas -Clara Driscoll Chapter will be Commissioner Veronica Wilson."

Commissioner Wilson: "Since 1891 The Daughters of the Republic of Texas, educates, researches, preserves, and protects the history of the Republic of Texas for all future generations. Our Corpus Christi Clara Driscoll Chapter, founded in 1932, focuses their educational programs on local and regional history. These amazing women go into our area ISD's to directly educate our young Texans; and generously donate their time, funding, and artifacts to our Coastal Bend historical entities, libraries, schools, and museums. Their annual local history contest for both student and educator entrants has produced champions who have recieved state level recognition. They work diligently and passionately at their purpose which is to promote, preserve, and protect Texas history. They encourage historical research into the earliest records of Texas; foster the preservation of documents and relics; encourage the publication of Republic service records and other source material, all to perpetuate the memory and spirit of our Texas forbears and pass this knowledge on to future generations. It is long past time that the Sparkling City By the Sea recognized their collective educational work and academic sponsorship. The Landmark Commission of the City of Corpus Christi h_apply bestows the 2026 Historic Preservation Award for Education upon The Daughters of The Republic of Texas, Clara Driscoll Chapter."

Chairman Pruitt: "I have the honor of presenting our third Education Award this evening to a dear friend of Corpus Christi and Nueces County who recently passed away- Bill Havelka."

Chairman Pruitt: "William "Bill" Havelka made an immeasurable impact on history education in the Coastal Bend over the course of many decades. An active member of the Texas Archaeological Society, the Friends of the Old Bayview Cemetery Association, the Nueces County Historical Commission, Coastal Bend Archaeological Society, and other organizations, Bill shared his immense knowledge of South Texas history to Coastal Bend residents of all ages. Often in collaboration with the Coastal Bend Archaeological Society, Bill conducted numerous excavations across the region and was eager to involve community stakeholders, who ranged from journalists to school children to college students. On multiple occasions, Bill welcomed history and anthropology students from Del Mar College and Texas A&M University-Kingsville to join in excavations at Old San Patricio, an early settlement site that exposed students to the themes of 19th century military history, trade, and frontier culture. He taught the students about the site's history, shared his expertise on excavation techniques, and helped them to develop artifact identification strategies. For many years, he assisted with archaeological field schools and excavations at Fort Lipantitlan and sites along the Nueces River. Many of the students took this knowledge to their future coursework and careers. At another excavation at Artesian Park, Bill taught not only college students but also other community members who responded to the call to participate in an archaeological excavation. His generous and collaborative mindset helped local residents to connect to their history and to feel like an active part of the research process."

"As a member of the Nueces County Historical Commission, Bill was the point person for

archaeological knowledge of local properties. His expertise was critical in advising the Nueces County Commissioners Court on whether construction projects involving the county would affect potential archaeological sites. Bill also coordinated archaeology month for the Historical Commission, thereby helping fellow commission members to be more knowledgeable stewards of local heritage. In his many years of sharing his expertise and passion for local history and archaeology, Bill approached each project and event with patience, kindness, and enthusiasm. Bill passed away in January 2026 at the age of 92, leaving a meaningful and lasting legacy in our region."

"Receiving the award in his honor are members of the Nueces County Historical Commission who served alongside Bill for many years."

Chairman Pruitt: "In addition to our Education Award, the Landmark Commission would like to extend a Special Recognition to Eli Oliver for his work on the NASA Tracking Station at Bill Witt Park as part of his Eagle Scout Project. Presenting the award to Mr. Oliver will be Vice Chairman Landreth.

Vice Chairman Landreth: Eli Oliver, a senior at Annapolis Christian Academy, was seeking a project for his Eagle Scout award. Eli had been interested in both the city's history and our nation's space program. Through his research, Eli found that NASA established a tracking station for its Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and Skylab missions near what is now Bill Witt Aquatic Center. The first live television broadcast of our NASA astronauts from space to earth was transmitted through the local tracking station during the Apollo 7 mission.

Eli did extensive research and created four interpretive panels now erected at that site adjacent to the water park. The citizens of our city may now read of the strong link between NASA, the Apollo space program, and Corpus Christi. Eli will be taking the next big step in his young life when he enrolls at Texas A&M-Galveston this fall, pursuing a degree in Engineering. Although NASA's tracking station is now gone, making way for a soccer field, Eli's work will ensure that the people of Corpus Christi know in detail of another landmark for the city.

Thank you, Eli Oliver!

By the way, Eli was able to get the project designed, approved, constructed, and installed - all through private donations and funding. There was no cost to the city of Corpus Christi, and the project included over 500 hours to complete.

History Book Award:

Chairman Pruitt: "The History Book Award recognizes historical monographs (past or present) that communicate the history of Corpus Christ. In the History Book category, we recognize Dan R. Manning for his biography of John Dix, entitled Captain John Dix, 1796-1870: A Texas Pioneer. Presenting the award will be Commissioner McLaughlin.

Commissioner McLaughlin.: "Born in 1796, John Dix personified the robust life of the early American Republic. The son of a Massachusetts Minute Man who fought with the Continental Army under George Washington. John Dix left home at the age of sixteen to

fight in the War of 1812 on an American Privateer. After the war, he captained a ship in the South Pacific before returning to the United States to settle in the Michigan territory where he founded the town of Dixboro in 1824. Captain Dix and his family arrived in Texas in 1834. In 1835 he fought in the First Battle of Bexar. After Texas gained its independence, he moved to Corpus Christi in 1849 and purchased waterfront property at what is now Taylor and Water Street where he built what later became the Seaside Hotel. Dix served as Surveyor and Inspector of Revenue for the Port of Corpus Christi and remained loyal to the Union during the U.S. Civil War. Sentenced to be hanged due to his Union sympathy, the Union Army elevated Dix for the prison cell to the position of County Judge where he worked to bring peace and prosperity back to the region. As an agent for the Freedmen's Bureau, Dix worked with freed slaves to help them navigate post-slavery Texas. A public servant to the end, John Dix died on January 18, 1870. Dan Manning is to be commended for bringing the story of this remarkable man to the reading public."

Chairman Pruitt: "Our second History Book Awards recognizes the work of Dr. A.C. Peirce, *A Man From Corpus Christi: The True Adventures of Two Bird Hunters and a Dog in South Texas During the Year 1887*. Presenting the award will be Commissioner Cheryl McLaughlin."

Commissioner McLaughlin: In 1887, a Boston physician, Dr. Arthur C. Peirce, traveled to South Texas for bird hunting, guided by a renown local tracker, hunter, and guide, John M. Priour, on about a 400-mile trek through bramble, bogs, forest and mud. Their story includes hunting, interactions with local people, camp misadventures, and the inept hunting dog, Absalom (according to Dr. Peirce).

My reason for bringing recognition and in nominating this book, *A Man From Corpus Christi*, is trifold.

First, this book is an exemplary example of another time in life of how harsh the landscape of our local Coastal South Texas region was for its inhabitants. The editor, Michelle Haas recounts, "Through Peirce's eyes, we see how sparsely settled Corpus Christi and the surrounding areas were in the late 19th century. We visit towns and settlements now extinct. We encounter freed slaves and their families living in the river bottoms and observe their living conditions and vernacular. We witness the abundance of bird life along the coast and beyond. We are exposed to the rigors of camp life – sleeping in a homespun tent during a spring downpour, the culinary horrors, and dangers of skunks, wasps, mosquitoes, marauding pigs... even the occasional pterodactyl."

Secondly, this book brings us into the world and science of Ornithology, which is the branch of zoology that studies birds. It clarifies the reason that classifies Corpus Christi and the local region as one of the most birdiest areas in our nation, putting us on the Ornithological Map. As the editor, Michelle Haas states, John M. Priour "served as a guide and collector of specimens for many prominent ornithologists whose collections went on to form the basis of renowned museum collections. Though he collected thousands of specimens over the years and labeled them with such data as was necessary, Mr. Priour does not appear to have credited himself as the collector of any of them."

Finally, this book is a personal connection to my ancestral roots. I currently own my family business, Hatch RV Park. The property is part of the original 100 acres of farmland owned by James C. and Frances Hatch. Frances (Priour) Hatch is my maternal ancestral grandmother and sister to John M. Priour, my ancestral uncle. Their mother is Rosalie Hart Priour, who is renowned among local historians for her unpublished autobiography, "The Adventures of a Family of Emigrants Who Emigrated to Texas in 1834".

While editing this tome *A Man from Corpus Christi*, in the Publisher's Note, Michelle Haas remarked: "Reviewing each work and paragraph was enjoyable because Peirce's prose is so engaging and the story so amusing, I now count it among my favorite Texas books." She further writes that; "this book would most likely never have come to my attention were it not for another 'man from Corpus Christi' – Jim Moloney... a dear friend with a penchant for Corpus Christi history, books, postcards, and other ephemera, has spoken fondly of this book to me for several years and it was at his suggestion that the book has now been republished. "

In the republished version, Jim Moloney wrote the Introduction, as well as historical details About the Author – Arthur Clarence (A. C.) Peirce (1858 – 1903), and About the Man from Corpus Christi – John Marion Priour (1848 – 1931). Jim Moloney also provided additional images, maps, and information from various sources, like the Doc McGregor collection, that helped to complete the local historical context and back story of the characters.

I first learned of this book a few years ago when I met Mr. Moloney at a book-signing event for Murphey Givens's newly published book, *Columns IV: 2016–2018*. Mr. Moloney told me there was a book about John M. Priour and encouraged me to look it up. I remembered his suggestion and, a few years later, found the book on Amazon. I am very glad I did and grateful that Jim Moloney brought it to my attention.

In recognition of outstanding achievement in documenting, interpreting, and preserving the history of our community. Your scholarship deepens our understanding of the past and ensures that the stories shaping our identity endure for all future generations.

Jim Moloney, I am honored and privileged to present this award to you.

Landmark Commission Art Awards:

Chairman Pruitt: "The Landmark Commission is presenting three art awards this year—one each for Digital Art, for traditional Painting and Drawing, and for Photography. Presenting the awards will be the members of our Sub-Committee on the Art Contest."

Commissioner Moreno: We're excited to reveal the winners of the 2026 Preservation Awards Art Contest, which explored the theme *The Ghosts of Corpus Christi*. Daniel Rohde earned the Digital Art Award for his portrayal of Corpus Christi's historical evolution, beautifully illustrating the transfer of its enduring heritage across generations /Mrs. Jenna M. Guerra received the Photography Award for her striking series of Photos featuring The Castle in Lake Corpus Christi Park, a testament to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) craftsmanship/Tony Armadillo secured the Painting and Drawing Award for his evocative vintage street scene, highlighting the historic R Galvan

Ballroom. A respected art educator and Corpus Christi Art Center board member, Armadillo is known for his distinctive style and profound impact on the local art community. He has been referred to as the Mexican Rockwell/Dali and his work is being reviewed and considered for the Smithsonian.

Closing Remarks:

Chairman Pruitt: "We would like to thank all of our award recipients for their dedication to the local community and to the shared history that binds us together."

At this time the meeting went into recess for five minutes so Landmark Commission could congratulate all the award recipients.

VI. Historic Preservation Officer Report

Just a reminder the proclamation reading will be held on June 23rd. Commissioners and recipients are all invited to attend.

Also, we have received the resignation of Commissioner Underwood.

VII. Future Agenda Items

Commissioner McLaughlin made a motion to cancel the June LMC meeting.

Commissioner Becquet seconded. The Vote: All Aye. Motion passes. Meeting will resume in July 2026.

Commissioner Riggle discussed sitting up a walk through Sacred Heart Church for the commissioners.

Chairman Dr. Pruitt stated this would be his last meeting due to his family relocating to another state.

Discussion will be ongoing about awarded art pieces to be on display at the Art Center.

VIII. Adjournment

Being no other business to discuss, Chairman Pruitt entertained for a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Becquet made motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Commission Riggle seconded. The Vote: All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 5:33 pm.