



COUNTY OF EL PASO
DAVID C. STOUT
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT TWO

February 6, 2017

Honorable THC Commissioners
Texas Historical Commission
1511 Colorado Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear THC Commissioners,

At your latest meeting to consider applications for historic designations, eight applications prepared and submitted by the El Paso County Historical Commission (CHC) were held back for further review. Among those was an application for a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation for the former Chinese laundry building located at 212 W. Overland Avenue in the Union Plaza District.

This structure is a significant relic that illustrates the contributions of Chinese immigrants to El Paso's growth, economy, and overall history. This structure also faces serious risk of destruction unless certain interventions occur, including an RTHL designation.

I was disappointed to read a letter submitted to you from the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce's board chair and CEO, discouraging the THC from approving the RTHL for the Chinese laundry building. The Chamber of Commerce cites "fundamental flaws" in the submission of that application. While there have been errors on the part of the CHC, the Chamber's characterization was incorrect and unfair.

The CHC's historical markers committee prepared and submitted the Chinese laundry building RTHL application, among others, as they have consistently done over the years. That action is noted in the CHC's minutes for the regular meeting on January 9, 2017.

While we have discovered that recently there may have been compliance issues with the Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA) on behalf of the CHC, the El Paso County Attorney's office has reviewed the CHC's meeting processes and the El Paso County Commissioners Court instructed them to submit their findings to the District Attorney, however, no charges have been filed to date. The members of the CHC, like all citizens, must be presumed innocent, contrary to the tone of the Chamber's letter which reads more like an indictment.

I sincerely believe that if processes were not followed by the CHC, then it was done unintentionally, and that the County of El Paso bears responsibility, in part, for not providing adequate trainings covering ethics and TOMA.

As a result of all that has surfaced, trainings are being organized and will commence in the coming weeks by the County of El Paso to ensure all of our volunteer boards and commissions adhere to strict practice of our Code of Ethics and TOMA.

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