

## Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 318

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Complete statute is provided online [here](#). Excerpt below serves as an outline for structuring a County Historical Commission (CHC) and the work in which it participates. We provide hyperlinks within the body connecting you to additional web material for your reference and use.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE, TITLE 10., SUBTITLE B. CHAPTER 318., SUBCHAPTER A. COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

**Sec. 318.001. DEFINITION.** In this subchapter, "commission" means the county historical commission.

**Sec. 318.002. ESTABLISHMENT.** The commissioners court of a county may appoint a county historical commission for the purpose of [initiating and conducting programs](#) suggested by the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of the county's historic cultural resources. Programs suggested by the Texas Historical Commission must be consistent with the [statewide preservation plan](#). In suggesting programs, the [Texas Historical Commission](#) shall consider the fiscal and human resources the county has to conduct the programs.

**Sec. 318.003. COMPOSITION; TERM.**

(a) The commission must be composed of at least seven residents of the county. Members of the commission must be individuals who broadly reflect the age, ethnic, and geographic diversity of the county.

(b) The members of the commission shall be appointed during the month of January of odd-numbered years and are appointed for a term of two years. The commissioners court shall fill a vacancy on the commission for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(c) [Each commission member must have](#) an interest in historic preservation and an understanding of local history and resources.

(d) The commissioners court shall provide to the Texas Historical Commission [a list of appointed members](#) and the mailing address of each member.

**Sec. 318.004. APPOINTMENT BY STATE.** If the commissioners court fails to appoint a commission by April 1 of each odd-numbered year, the Texas Historical Commission may appoint

the commission after 30 days' written notice to the commissioners court of its intention to do so. The county judge shall serve as commission chair during any interim period.

**Sec. 318.005. MEETINGS.**

(a) The commission shall meet at least four times each year and may meet as often as the commission may determine under rules adopted by it for its own regulation.

(b) All meetings of the commission shall be conducted in accordance with the [open meetings law](#), Chapter 551, Government Code.

**Sec. 318.006. RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION.** (a) The commission should institute and carry out a [continuing survey](#) of the county to determine the existence of historic buildings and other historical and archeological sites, private archeological collections, important endangered properties, or other historical features within the county, and should report the data collected to the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission.

(b) The commission should develop and maintain its inventory of surveyed individual properties and districts in accordance with [standards established by the Texas Historical Commission](#).

(c) The commission should establish a system for the periodic review and assessment of the condition of designated properties in the county, including [Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks](#), [State Archeological Landmarks](#), and individual historic properties or districts listed in the [National Register of Historic Places](#). The commission should report the results of the review and assessment to the Texas Historical Commission.

**Sec. 318.007. EDUCATION.** The commission should strive to create countywide awareness and appreciation of historic preservation and its benefits and uses.

**Sec. 318.008. REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

(a) In order to inform the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission of the commission's needs and programs, the commission shall make an [annual report of its activities](#) and recommendations to the commissioners court and to the Texas Historical Commission before the end of each calendar year. The commission may make as many other reports and recommendations as it sees fit.

(b) The commission shall make recommendations to the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission concerning the acquisition and designation of property, real or personal, that is of historical or archeological significance.

**Sec. 318.009. FISCAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES.**

(a) The commissioners court may pay the necessary expenses of the commission.

(b) The commissioners court may make agreements with governmental agencies or private organizations and may appropriate funds from the general fund of the county for the purpose of:

(1) erecting historical markers and monuments;

(2) purchasing objects and collections of objects that are historically significant to the county;

(3) preparing, publishing, and disseminating, by sale or otherwise, a history of the county;

(4) hiring professional staff and consultants;

(5) providing matching funds for grants; and

(6) funding other programs or activities as suggested by the Texas Historical Commission and the commissioners court.

(c) The Texas Historical Commission may make grants available to the commission, subject to the budgetary authority and approval of the commissioners court, to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

**Sec. 318.010. RESOURCE INTERPRETATION.**

(a) The commission shall review applications for Official Texas Historical Markers to determine the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness of the application.

(b) The commission should establish a system for the periodic review, assessment, and maintenance of Official Texas Historical Markers in the county.

(c) The commission should work to promote historic and cultural sites in the county to develop and sustain heritage tourism.

(d) The commission may:

(1) operate and manage any museum owned or leased by the county;

(2) acquire artifacts and other museum collections in the name of the museum or the commission; and

(3) supervise any employees hired by the commissioners court to operate the museum.

(e) In operating museums, the commission shall adhere to professional standards in the care, collection, management, and interpretation of artifacts.

**Sec. 318.0101. PLANNING.** The commission should work in partnership with other preservation entities in the county to prepare a plan for the preservation of the county's historic and cultural resources. The commission should use the Texas Historical Commission's statewide preservation plan for guidance.

**Sec. 318.0102. LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING.**

(a) The Texas Historical Commission shall make orientation materials and training available to all county historical commissions.

(b) The commission should strive to be represented at informational or educational meetings sponsored by the Texas Historical Commission at least twice each year.

(c) The commission, with assistance from the Texas Historical Commission, shall carry out board and volunteer training.

**Sec. 318.012. HISTORIC SITE TAX EXEMPTION.**

(a) The commissioners court may establish a program under which the commission:

(1) receives and reviews applications that are filed with the county and that request a property tax exemption under Section 11.24, Tax Code; and

(2) recommends to the commissioners court whether to grant the exemption and, if the grant of the exemption is recommended, how much of the property's assessed value should be exempt from taxation.

(b) The commission may examine the property that is granted the exemption on recommendation of the commission and recommend to the commissioners court whether the exemption should be withdrawn because of changed circumstances involving the property.

(c) A person is entitled to appear before the commissioners court and state any objections to a recommendation made by the commission under this section regarding property owned by the person.

(d) The commissioners court may require a person whose property is granted the exemption to notify the commission of any plans the person may have to modernize the property or change it in any other manner.

**Sec. 318.013. CONTRACTS FOR LEASE OR MANAGEMENT OF LANDMARKS.**

(a) The commissioners court may, on recommendation of the commission or other interested persons, contract with a private person for the lease or management of any county-owned real estate or structure that is designated by the Texas Historical Commission as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark considered worthy of preservation because of its history, culture, or architecture.

(b) The contract must be drawn in consultation with the commission and must specify the duties of the contracting party, including duties as to:

(1) maintenance and repairs;

(2) providing public access;

(3) restricting inappropriate commercial uses; and

(4) promoting preservation of the historic, cultural, or architectural aspects of the landmark.

(c) The contract may be handled in the same manner as a contract for professional services rendered to a county, such as a contract for architectural or engineering services, if the contract is with a nonprofit organization chartered in this state.

(d) The contract may be for a period of years as determined by the commissioners court.

## SUBCHAPTER B. SUPPORT OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

**Sec. 318.021. APPROPRIATIONS TO HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS: CERTAIN COUNTIES.**

The commissioners court of a county with a population of 239,000 to 825,000 may appropriate money from the general fund of the county to a historical foundation or organization in the county for the purpose of purchasing, constructing, restoring, preserving, maintaining, or reconstructing historical landmarks, buildings, and furnishings that are of historical significance to the county. The foundation or organization must be incorporated under the law of this state as a nonprofit corporation.