



Alachua County Board of County Commissioners

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County Manager

June 25, 2024

Alissa Lotane, Director of Historic Preservation
Florida's National Register Review Board
Division of Historical Resources
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Cemetery Restoration Organization, Archer, Alachua County, Florida

Dear Members of the Florida National Register Review Board,

The Alachua County Commission is pleased to support the nomination to the National Register of the African American Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Cemetery. We thank the State Division of Historical Resources for assisting the Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Cemetery Restoration Organization (BMECRO), the property owners, with completing the documentation of this property. This African American Cemetery, the final resting place of many once enslaved, prominent ministers, and veterans, was virtually abandoned over time. In 1999 Careatha "Clyde" Williams, a descendant, organized BMECRO to preserve the resting place of the community's ancestors and to honor their resilience in the face of enslavement, segregation and racial terror. The organization partnered with the University of Florida's Historic Preservation Program to document and restore the cemetery. In 2022 a monument, with the names of all known people buried there, was dedicated. In 2023 a State historical marker was unveiled.

The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Historic Preservation Element includes, "Policy 1.1.4. The County shall coordinate with adjacent local governments, the State, and the Federal Government to preserve and protect historic resources and properties of local, regional and national significance." Including this property on the Nation Register will help ensure the protection of a very significant cemetery, as noted in the application document. The Alachua County Historical Commission provided a letter of support to the State Review Board, and we are glad to also support this nomination. Achieving National Register recognition of this property is part of our local effort to create a culture of respect for and preservation of our historic resources.

Should you require any assistance on this or other matters regarding Alachua County history, we are pleased to offer the assistance of the Alachua County Historical Commission, our Advisory Board of persons knowledgeable

of local history. The Historical Commission's staff liaison, Michael Castine, Senior Planner in the Alachua County Department of Growth Management may be contacted at 352-374-5249.

Thank you and we look forward to the ceremony to dedicate a new National Register site.

Respectfully,



Mary Alford
Chair, Alachua County Commission
Chr.24.XXX

MA/MC/mc

cc: Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
Michele Lieberman, Alachua County Manager
Sylvia Torres, Alachua County Attorney
Jeffrey Hays, Director, Alachua County Growth Management
Gwen Thompson, Chair, Alachua County Historical Commission
Roberta C. Lopez, Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Cemetery Restoration Organization