



Hernando County Board of County Commissioners
20 N Main St # 460
Brooksville, FL 34601

Via Email

April 28, 2025

RE: Chinsegut Hill Historic Site

To the Hernando County Board of Commissioners:

The Historic Hernando Preservation Society (HHPS) believes Chinsegut Hill to be one of our county's most important assets. The historic site provides an opportunity for residents and visitors to experience natural Florida and gain understanding of local history. We have been very grateful to the Tampa Bay History Center (TBHC) for lending their professional expertise to the museum. We are also very grateful to the Hernando County BOCC for pursuing the lease with the State of Florida as we believe our local government is best equipped to understand and preserve the stories of its people.

Several of our board members attended the meeting in which you discussed the possibility of termination of your lease and we unanimously oppose the idea. There is no guarantee that a new leasee would be found, and even less of a guarantee that they would make the property available to the public. When the Robins family donated their 2000 acres to the US Government, it was given as a sanctuary intended for public recreational use as well as agricultural research on the farm portions. The portion of that sanctuary leased by the county includes the manor house, several Civilian Conservation Corps structures, the retreat center, and about 100 acres of natural woodlands and animals. It is currently an underutilized asset for the community.

Under the Friends of Chinsegut, locals became accustomed to having daily access to the property. It was used regularly for hiking, retreats, family gatherings, weddings, and photography. We would like to see that type of access regained, and are offering to pick up a portion of the lease in order to make the property more accessible.

Our board contains people who already are, or have been, volunteering and working at Chinsegut. Ross Lamoreaux is the TBHC Chinsegut Site Manager. His wife, Amber, is a Chinsegut docent for school groups and Deb Charlow is also a docent there. Historic preservation contractor Jo-Anne Peck was involved in the 2014 renovation of the Manor House, as was I. Former board member Dennis Yettaw maintained the grounds as a volunteer during the *Friends* years, and I served as the first President of that organization. We believe our background makes us the perfect nonprofit to assist you in making Chinsegut a cherished public asset.

We realize the path forward for the City and BOCC at Chinsegut is unclear at this moment, and wanted to make you aware of our interest as both entities work through the decision-making process. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Jan Knowles
HHPS President