



Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Virtual Meeting
November 5, 2020 - 4:00 P. M.
MINUTES

November 5, 2020 Historic Site and Monument Commission Meeting

Members Present: Dr. Nicholas Henry, Chair
Kristopher Monroe, Vice-Chairman
Thomas Gensheimer
Sean Mannion
Lisa Watson

MPC Staff Present: Leah Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation
Ryan Jarles, Cultural Resources Planner

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

[1. Approve Meeting Minutes from the August 6, 2020 Regular Meeting](#)

[📎 08.06.20 MEETING MINUTES.pdf](#)

Motion

Approve August 6, 2020 HSMC Meeting Minutes as presented.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Kristopher Monroe

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Dr. Nicholas Henry - Abstain

Kristopher Monroe - Aye

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

III. Regular Agenda

[2. Review of and Recommendations to City Council regarding the Civil War Memorial Task Force Final Report - Luciana Spracher](#)

[📎 Senate Bill 77.pdf](#)

Mr. Henry introduced Luciana Spracher, Director of Municipal Archives for the City of Savannah.

Ms. Spracher presented the presentation provided to City Council in October 2020 as Staff Liaison for the Civil War Memorial Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of local preservationists, historians, along with past and current administrators of various marker and monument programs with the goal of providing recommendations to make Savannah's memorial more representative of the community and preserving Savannah's history. Additional steps were suggested for Council to consideration before passing an ordinance, and to obtain the insight of the Monument Commission, as well as the constituents.

The original recommendations approved in February 2018 were to rename from the Confederate Memorial to the Civil War Memorial and leave the central memorial in its current location, and to install a bronze plaque dedicated to the Confederate dead and later to the American Civil War dead. This creates an opportunity to be left for future generations to alter or add with recognition that it was previously redesigned. The Task Force also recommended to relocate the McLaws and Bartow busts to Laurel Grove North Cemetery, and to not replace the moved monuments at their original site. Another recommendation was to retain the fencing and its elliptical shape, and expand the causes and effects of the Civil War in Savannah beyond Forsyth Park Memorial site. Council unanimously approved with the condition that the City Attorney provide a legal opinion to legally move forward with the recommendations. The Task Force was informed adding the bronze plaque and relocating the monuments to the Laurel Grove Cemetery was not permissible, thus putting recommended actions on hold. In 2020, vandalism in Forsyth Park and Laurel Grove Cemetery required the task force to reconvene to determine interpretive signage at the sites. The Task Force was told signage was permissible only outside of the fence line and could not touch the fence. Review of prior recommendations resulted in reversal of support to move the busts. The new recommendation in regard to the busts was to put in storage until a proper location can be identified.

New recommendations were presented: rename to the "Civil War Memorial" from the "Confederate War Monument", and to be identified as such in all reports, websites and communication, indicating the City taking the lead, as well as the task force. The second recommendation is to include the amendment of Georgia State Law preventing local governments from altering and/or removing monuments and memorials that no longer serve the needs of its constituents. The community should be able to make the decision without limitations. The interpretative of signage supported the original recommendation to install one interpretative sign outside the grounds memorial fence-line with a panel that incorporates a pictorial timeline of the memorial site, with historical timeline text regarding the monument. The proposed signage of the text allows for modifications. The final recommendation is to establish a permanent cultural history and education committee with its members rotating and inclusive of all districts, expanding the story of the Civil War in Savannah in a proactive and inclusive way. It will expound upon the history of experiences of African Americans, Native Americans, and women. The intent of the new 2020 recommendations are to reinforce those approved in 2018, within the confines of current state law and keep within the spirit of Savannah's dedication to preservation and the history of the Civil War Memorial, not the history of the Civil War in general. The new recommendations can be approved individually, though the Task Force believes collectively would be the best solution. The guidance of the Historic Site and Monument Commission is requested as the Task Force moves forward.

Mr. Monroe stated he thought it important that what the law says is actually understood by all. **Mr. Jarles** stated it is on the agenda and it will be addressed. **Mr. Monroe** stated that

moving the busts is illegal per the law; he wanted to address it to possibly save time and discussion. **Mr. Henry** stated he understood the busts could not be moved to the individual's gravesite or other sites honoring them. **Mr. Monroe** stated it is specifically prohibited from gravesites, mausoleums, or museums. There is a provision due to preservation and protection, their movement shall not be prohibited. Thus, he believes there is a misunderstanding as to what can be done. He stated he has spoken with the City attorney and reminded that every lawyer has a different opinion.

Ms. Spracher stated the Task Force makes its decision when the City makes the decision from their legal representation; they are not considering moving at this point and it is not legal. **Mr. Monroe** disagreed; relocation to storage is legally acceptable as other counties have done - but not to a cemetery - they can be moved to other places without ramifications. **Ms. Spracher** stated the City Attorney addressed the preservation movement and recommended watching the work session on October 8, 2020, which highlighted the various municipalities and parties to have varying outcomes.

Mr. Mannion stated he agreed with Mr. Monroe. He asked about the timeline of engaging citizens. **Ms. Spracher** stated they offered to assist and no timeline has been proposed, nor was feedback provided for the Task Force to assist. **Mr. Mannion** asked if the engagement with citizens rests in the hands of the council members and to their discretion as to how they engage with their constituents. **Ms. Spracher** agreed. **Mr. Mannion** asked exactly where would the sign go. **Ms. Spracher** stated it would have to go into the walk way; advised by the City Attorney that it can be as close to the fence as possible without touching the fence because everything inside the fence is considered a memorial site as currently interpreted by the attorneys. **Mr. Mannion** stated they should be thrown away, rather than just put into storage.

Ms. Watson stated preserve and protect is the main issue regarding the busts. She asked how much they cost to clean when vandalized and who's purview does that fall under. **Ms. Spracher** stated it falls under the Greenscapes Division; the cost was recouped from the vandals.

Mr. Gensheimer stated he believes the ultimate goal is to move them; viewpoints of history change. Storage would be appropriate. He asked what is the goal of HSMC; he believed they have no power as it will ultimately be decided by council and beyond. **Ms. Spracher** stated council requested HSMC to weigh in on the recommendations.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Ardis Wood, citizen, thanked the Task Force for still recommending to remove the busts.

Mr. Mannion recommended to accept the recommendations with the exception of removing the busts with all deliberate speed.

Ms. Spracher stated the City has storage locations for the busts.

Mr. Monroe asked the thoughts of expanding the HSMC Board for inclusivity and education. He wants to know how this will be presented to council. He does not want this relayed through staff and it should have been done already. He wants to push harder and receive action on this matter; he is frustrated with the inaction of City Council. **Mr. Henry** suggested one of the Board members write a letter and have the board agree, then send it to Council. **Mr. Monroe** stated he does not want to belabor this and wants to get them moved expeditiously.

Ms. Watson motioned to move the busts to storage with all deliberate speed to preserve and protect from vandalism.

Mr. Monroe stated we want it known the effort to protect the busts.

Mr. Henry proposed: We, the HSMC Board, respectfully and unanimously urge City Council to remove the two busts of McLaws and Bartow from Forsyth Park to storage with all deliberate speed to preserve and protect historic statuary from vandalism, with the revised task force recommendations.

Motion

Approve the revised recommendations of Civil War Task Force, with emphasis on removing the McLaws and Bartow monuments and placing them in storage until such time the City of Savannah can identify a proper location for them with all deliberate speed to protect and preserve from vandalism.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Kristopher Monroe

Second: Sean Mannion

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Dr. Nicholas Henry - Abstain

Kristopher Monroe - Aye

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

[3. Roberts Rules of Order Workshop - Pamela Everett](#)

📎 [Roberts-Rules-of-Order.pdf](#)

Ms. Pamela Everett highlighted the necessity of order established by Robert's Rules and it's process.

[4. Presentation of Master Plan and Guidelines Update - Ryan Jarles](#)

📎 [Masterplan update 11-5-2020.pdf](#)

Mr. Ryan Jarles presented the current process of the updates for Board consideration. Several pages were removed from document, and additional changes will be made to present to the Board then City Council.

The Board commended Staff for their work.

IV. Other Business

V. Adjournment

[5. Next Regular Meeting - December 3, 2020 at 4pm \(Virtual Meeting\)](#)

[6. Adjourn](#)

There being no further business to present before the Board, the November 5, 2020 Historic Site and Monument Commission Meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leah G. Michalak
Director of Historic Preservation
/bm

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.