

Commemorative Works Committee Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2022

1:00 to 2:00 PM

Attendees:

Committee Members

Anita Cozart, OP Interim Director
Dulce Naime, DPR
Jay Coleman, Citizen Member
Lauren Dugas-Glover, CAH
Otto Condon, Citizen Member

OP Staff

Alisonya Poole
Chris Shaheen
Kim Elliot
Leslye Howerton

Other

Ekaterina Elson

Minutes:

Chris Shaheen opened the meeting with a presentation on the Thomas Edison Bust at the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, the only formal commemorative work located east of the Anacostia River. Shaheen noted Anita Cozart, Dulce Naime, Jay Coleman, Lauren Dugas-Glover, Otto Condon were in attendance, a quorum of the Commemorative Works Committee (CWC) was present, and the formal meeting could commence. Dugas-Glover moved, and Otto Condon seconded, a motion to approve the minutes for the December 20th meeting and the CWC voted to approve them unanimously.

Alisonya Poole gave an update on the location strategy and stated it will include background information on commemorative works in the District of Columbia, a review of the process that was used to organize and identify potential commemorative work sites, a detailed profile on 40 sites, and a list of all potential sites that have been identified. Public feedback resulted in changing at least one of the sites with a more detailed profile. Additional sites with detailed profiles will be added over time. The document will also cover how the strategy overlaps and reinforces other District priorities and initiatives, like promoting racial equity, recent historic thematic studies completed by the Historic Preservation Office, and the University of the District of Columbia's study on potential commemoration subjects. The document will clearly outline how potential sponsors of commemorative works, District agencies, the public, and the CWC can use the document to prepare applications and promote commemoration. The CWC provided comments on the information that will be included on individual profile sheets at a previous meeting and staff is compiling that information now. A draft of the document will be shared with the CWC at the March meeting.

Shaheen gave an update on the National Capital Planning Commission's (NCPC) kick-off event for the Beyond Granite initiative that the CWC was briefed on at the December 2021 meeting. The virtual event was held January 20, 2022 and included an overview of existing commemorative works in the United States that overwhelmingly emphasize white male subjects. The initiative is part of the Mellon Foundation's \$250 million commitment to reshape commemoration in the United States by supporting public projects that represent a wider range of American subjects and stories. Beyond Granite will install eight to 10 temporary commemorative works in and around the National Mall and the District over the next two years. Discussion at the event referred to the District's location strategy as one of the resources being used to identify sites and specifically mentioned Pennsylvania Avenue SE as an area being considered for sites. The emphasis on temporary installations will alleviate the need for projects to go through the more extensive and costly review process required for permanent commemorative works and will reduce costs associated with installation and maintenance, both factors acknowledged as possible reasons for discouraging diverse commemorative subjects. Future work of the program will include public discussions and coordination with committees including members representing District and federal agencies. OP staff will continue to work with NCPC as they identify locations for installations. The full kick-off event will be posted on NCPC's website and staff will share that link with CWC members when it is available.

It is anticipated that the CWC will be included in the initiative over the next two years in some capacity, but exactly how is still being defined. Over the next five weeks NCPC is holding working sessions to define themes and review processes based on survey results gathered at the kick-off meeting and the CWC will be briefed on this work at future meetings as this evolves.

Shaheen moved to the CWC's review of the commemorative work application of Huseyn Javid that includes a bust of the Azerbaijani poet in public space outside of the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce at 1212 Potomac Street NW. This is the application's second time coming before the CWC, which completed a concept review of the proposal at the February 2021 meeting. Since that time the applicant has had extensive discussions with the Old Georgetown Board that resulted in changes to the application that delayed it coming back to the CWC. At the February 2021 meeting, the CWC asked for additional information on the application and recommended it proceed with concurrent reviews. If the Committee completes its review today its recommendation will be formatted as a Final Action and forwarded to the Mayor and District Council. The proposed commemorative work is in the Georgetown neighborhood, not far from the Francis Scott Key Memorial at the intersection of the Key Bridge and M Street NW. It is sponsored by the Azerbaijani Women of America. When last reviewed by the CWC the application was for bust of Javid on a free-standing pedestal. Based on comments from the Old Georgetown Board the proposal has been revised to be a bronze sculpture attached to the building immediately to the right of the entrance to the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce that projects into District public space. All other reviews required by the Commemorative Works Act or because of its location in Georgetown have been completed. It was referred to ANC-2E, which did not provide comments on the application. The Chair of the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission reviewed the application and provided comments noting the commemorative work is not located in a park or other public or similarly prominent space and concluded that given its placement no further review by the Commission is necessary. The Old Georgetown Board and District Department of Transportation (DDOT) provided comments that required revisions or additional information.

As previously noted, the design of the bust changed significantly in response to comments from the Old Georgetown Board. As part of DDOT's review the applicant was required to provide documentation showing the adjacent property owner did not object to part of the sculpture extending into public space adjacent to that property, which the applicant provided. At its February 2021 meeting the CWC asked for three pieces of additional information regarding the proposal that the applicant has provided:

- 1) Information on an interpretive panel;
- 2) Information on materials and fabrication; and,
- 3) Information on the scale of the sculpture.

In response to the request for additional information on an interpretive panel, the applicant is now proposing a small bronze placard made of the same material used for the sculpture that will be located beneath the sculpture with information on Javid and a QR code leading directly to a webpage on the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce website with additional information on Javid, the sculpture, the artist, and an example of his poetry. The applicant's additional information also describes the material, method of fabrication, and finishes. The scale of the sculpture is 1-1/2 times larger-than-life. Based on staff review and the additional information provided by the applicant, the Office of Planning recommends the Committee support approval of the commemorative work by the Mayor and District Council.

Lauren Dugas-Glover asks for an image of the sculpture attached to building as viewed from the street showing how the bust extends from the side of the façade and into public space adjacent to the neighboring building. Shaheen stated that the applicant has documentation from the neighboring condo association documenting they have no issue with the sculpture and support the application. Dugas-Glover also asked about the appearance of the back of the sculpture and the interpretive panel, the impact of it projecting into public space, and whether there were any safety issues. Shaheen stated staff would follow up with the applicant to inquire about finishes of the back of the sculpture.

Condon stated he appreciated how the application had evolved and that the sculpture was an interesting precedent for future commemorative works. He stated that the location of the plaque is not visible in all renderings and that the wrapping of the sculpture around the side of the building should address issues with how it appears from the back. He asked for a better understanding of how the sculpture is viewed from the street and how it wraps around the corner.

Naime asked about how far the sculpture extends into public space, its visibility from the side, and that the images provided in the application provide conflicting information.

Coleman asked about the overhang of the sculpture into public space and wanted more information on how it connects to the building, the QR code, the treatment of the back of the sculpture, and the patina of the front and back of the sculpture. He stated that the QR code should be attached in a way that it can be updated and changed in response to new technologies.

Cozart stated the CWC could support the application and delegate final review to staff or have the applicant come back for a third review. Dugas-Glover stated she supported delegating final review to staff so that the applicant can proceed through the approval process without coming back to the CWC. Condon, Naime, and Coleman agreed with this approach.

CWC members continued to discuss the QR code. Naime shared concerns that some people may not have a phone and will be unable to access information through the QR code. Shaheen stated basic information about Javid would be on the plaque explaining who he is and the dates of his life. Dugas-Glover stated the website could be listed next to the QR code in case someone does not have a phone. Coleman commented that the color of the bronze patina should be specified.

Shaheen summarized the outstanding questions and additional information needed for the application:

- Images of the sculpture looking towards the south, showing how it wraps the corner and the relationship of the bust to the information plaque;
- More information of how the sculpture engages and wraps around the corner;
- Information on the finish on the back of the sculpture;
- How the sculpture connects to the building;
- How the QR code or website information will be interchangeable to respond to changing technology;
- Information that will be provided on the plaque and how to access the website; and,
- A RGB code specifying the color of the bronze finish.

Condon introduced a motion for staff to work with the applicant to resolve any outstanding issues and, based on applicants' ability to resolve outstanding issues, forward a recommendation supporting the application to the Mayor and District Council for their consideration. Dugas-Glover seconded the motion. CWC members voted to support the motion and it passed with unanimous support.

Shaheed stated that the last agenda item was an opportunity for CWC members to share with staff any topics related to commemoration they are interested in learning about. Naime stated she would like to know more about temporary commemoration and how District agencies can work together to promote local commemorative works. Condon stated he would like to know more about how the District plans for capital projects, how they relate to commemorative works, and the responsibility of the CWC in this context. Naime asked about the process of reviewing commemorative works, the responsibilities of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and if these review processes can be better coordinated. She also asked about how to expand public participation in the review of commemorative works and how to promote commemoration as a way support placemaking.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.