

Commemorative Works Committee Meeting

December 20, 2021

2:00 PM – 2:55 PM

Attendees:

Committee Members

Andrew Trueblood, OP, Chairperson
Dulce Naime, DPR
Jay Coleman, Citizen Member
Lauren Dugas-Glover, CAH
Marnique Heath, HPRB
Otto Cotton, Citizen Member

OP Staff

Alisonya Poole
Anita Cozart
Chris Shaheen
Kim Elliot
Leslye Howerton

Other

Angela Dupont, NCPC
Johanna McCrehan, NCPC
Melissa Lindsjo, NCPC
Michael Sherman, NCPC
Zita Orji, OOG

Minutes:

Chris Shaheen opened the meeting with an overview of a little-known, local commemorative installation at Harriet Tubman Elementary School in Columbia Heights that marks the outline of a house believed to represent a property whose owner objected to condemnation of land needed to build the school. Shaheen noted Andrew Trueblood, Dulce Naime, Marnique Heath, Marnique Heath, Jay Coleman, Lauren Dugas-Glover and Otto Condon were present - constituting a quorum of the Commemorative Works Committee (CWC) - and the formal meeting could commence. Dulce Naime moved to approve the November CWC meeting minutes and December meeting agenda, Andrew Trueblood seconded the motion, and all members voted to approve the motion.

Shaheen shared an update on the University of the District of Columbia's commemoration study and stated it recommended 12 individuals and one neighborhood organization as potential subjects for commemoration. He stated he will forward the full report to CWC members when it is made publicly available. Shaheen provided an update on how OP staff are successfully applying revised criteria to

determine if commemorative work subjects align with DC values that were refined after a discussion with CWC members at the July 2021 CWC meeting.

Heath, Chair of the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) and member of the CWC, gave a presentation on how the work of the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) overlaps with commemoration. She explained the legal basis of the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act 1978 that establishes protections for designated properties; safeguards historic, aesthetic, and cultural heritage; fosters civic pride in past accomplishment; protects and enhances District attractions and stimulates the economy; and promotes landmarks and historic districts to educate and promote the welfare of residents. She stated HPO regularly conducts thematic historic context surveys to identify and nominate new landmarks or to update the understanding of existing landmarks. She explained HPO in partnership with Cultural Tourism DC developed heritage trails and HPO has promoted DC history through interactive story maps told through GIS Maps, narrative text, and multi-media content. Trueblood asked if there were opportunities for collaboration between HPO and the Commemorative Works Program (CWP) to identify subjects that were not represented in current commemorative works. Heath stated HPRB would like to be more active in facilitating and collaborating on new commemorative works. Shaheen asked if there was anything OP staff should do during design review of commemorative work applications in historic districts to better coordinate with HPO staff process. Heath stated there may be opportunities for individuals not on HPRB to provide input in the design of applications and that review of commemorative works in historic districts should be fully coordinated by OP staff in CWP and HPO.

Johanna McCrehan, and urban planner in the policy and research division of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), gave a presentation on “Beyond Granite: Temporary Commemoration Pilot”, a federal initiative to promote commemoration in the nation’s capital. NCPC is the federal agency responsible for reviewing commemorative works proposed on federal lands. McCrehan stated the two main issues NCPC has identified with commemoration in the District is lack of diversity and representation in subjects and limited space for commemoration on or near the National Mall. She shared concerns about subjects that are represented in the top 50 memorials in the District: 50 percent of the subjects enslaved other people, 10 percent were black or indigenous, and 6 percent were women. She noted there were more monuments depicting mermaids (22) than those depicting US Congresswomen (2). She stated NCPC encourages temporary commemoration – examples provided include the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, Gun Violence Memorial, and COVID-19 Memorial - and is in the process of vetting future possibilities for doing this. The Beyond Granite initiative will include up to 10 temporary commemorative works on and around the national mall and in other areas of DC. The project is funded through an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant and it’s goal is to “transform the nation’s commemorative landscape by supporting public projects that more completely and accurately represent the multiplicity and complexity of American stories.” The initiative was launched in 2020 and “builds on efforts to express, elevate, and preserve the stories of those who have often been denied historical recognition, and explores how we might foster a more complete telling of who we are as a nation.” Beyond Granite will focus on commemoration consistent with several themes yet to be identified. The project is intended to create new models for commemoration, including a “Key Findings Report” to help guide future installations. Prominent locations will be identified in and around the Mall, as well as in DC neighborhoods, particularly along Pennsylvania Avenue SE on the east side of the Anacostia River. NCPC will work with OP to identify locations consistent with the District’s commemorative work location strategy. A steering committee organized by NCPC will guide the Beyond

Granite initiative over 27-months. The project kicked-off in October 2021 and the first workshop will be held in January 2022. Heath asked if UDC's work on identifying potential commemorative work subjects will be considered as part of Beyond Granite. McCrehan stated it would be used to help inform their project. Dugas-Glover stated that many of the names on UDC's list are already represented in public art, wanted to ensure government agencies working on commemoration coordinate with each other, and asked what the appropriate role for CWC is. McCrehan invited CWC members to participate in NCPC's upcoming workshops. Naime stated she is interested in temporary commemoration and asked if NCPC is defining topics for the temporary interventions, if they will be expanded to other parks, and NCPC's strategy for community engagement. McCrehan stated a lot of what will be done is still in development, temporary commemoration provides greater flexibility for topics to be considered, and that NCPC understands permanent commemoration can provide positive public amenities in parks and that this should be considered as part of reviewing temporary commemoration. The outreach strategy is not yet defined, but NCPC anticipates it will include virtual and in-person meetings. Trueblood noted the National Mall and its memorials is considered a substantially completed piece of art and asked if it is possible to look at it through an equity lens. McCrehan stated NCPC is looking to identify any potential changes to the current commemorative works act they operate under, updates to NCPC's memorial plan are on hold because of the Beyond Granite initiative, and this is something that will be reviewed and considered. Anita Cozart asked how to express the relationship between permanent and temporary commemoration to make sure it is appropriate and representative, how it is expressed as projects come in for review, and how it is expressed through policies, work of government agencies, and the CWC. McCrehan stated NCPC understands the importance of documenting temporary commemorative works, their power, and elevating them as positive alternatives.

Shaheen announced the next CWC meeting will be on January 21, 1:00 to 2:00 and meeting invites for 2022 will be sent out to all CWC members. Trueblood thanked CWC members for putting in the time and effort during the last year and their role in making the CWC a success.