

**Commemorative Works Committee – Special Meeting
1100-4th Street SW, Room E850**

June 15, 2017

3:30 pm

Agenda

1. Welcome/Introduction (5 minutes)
Eric Shaw, Director, Office of Planning & Committee Chair
2. Commemorative Works Program Overview (5 minutes)
Chris Shaheen, Program Manager, Office of Planning
3. Marion Barry Commission Overview (10 minutes)
Key Kendall, Chair, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
4. Presentation (10 minutes)
Arthur Espinoza, Director, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
Steven Weitzman, Artist, Weitzman Studios
5. Committee Discussion/Action (10 minutes)
Eric Shaw, Director, Office of Planning & Committee Chair

Draft Meeting Notes

Attendees

Sandy Allen, Department of Housing and Community Development Representative
Tomash Buckowiecki, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs Representative
Arthur Espinoza, Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Executive Director
Marnique Heath, Historic Preservation Review Board Representative
Kay Kendall, Commission to Commemorate and Recognize the Honorable Marion Barry, Jr. and
Commission on the Arts and Humanities
Regina Payton, Department of General Services Representative (via conference call)
Jeffrey Scott, Commission on the Art and Humanities Representative
Chris Shaheen, Office of Planning & Committee Secretary
Eric Shaw, Director of Office of Planning & Committee Chair
Brent Sisco, Department of Parks and Recreation Representative
Tanya Stern, Office of Planning
Lauren Vaughan, Secretary of the District of Columbia Representative
Steven Weitzman, Weitzman Studios
Sam Zimbabwe, District Department of Transportation Representative

Meeting Notes

Eric Shaw opened the meeting by welcoming committee members, reviewed the agenda, and introduced Chris Shaheen, the Committee Secretary and Office of Planning (OP) staff who worked with the Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) to prepare their application. Shaheen gave a brief overview of the Commemorative Works Committee (CWC), how it was established, its role in reviewing commemorative works, and guidelines for the review of applications established in the “Commemorative Works in Public Space Act of 2000”.

Arthur Espinoza gave a brief overview of the Commission to Commemorate and Recognize the Honorable Marion Barry, Jr., and explained it was established by Mayor Bowser in March 2015. The Commission met monthly from March through October of that year at meetings held in locations across the city that were open to the public. He stated that ideas on ways to honor Mayor Barry included a scholarship program, establishing a local holiday, and creating a museum. Based on the deliberations, public input, and City authority, the Commission offered four recommendations to commemorate and recognize the Honorable Marion Barry, Jr.:

1. Renaming Ballou Senior High School;
2. Renaming a road or street;
3. Naming the new student center at the University of the District of Columbia; and,
4. Erecting a bust or statue in front of or inside of the John A. Wilson Building.

Espinoza stated that the Executive Office of the Mayor elected to pursue the commissioning of a statue in the likeness of Mayor Barry to be sited in front of the John A. Wilson Building where Mayor Barry worked for many years. The statue will commemorate a lifetime of public service and will mark Mayor Barry’s legacy in a way that has significant visibility for both residents and visitors to the District of Columbia.

Espinoza stated that Mayor Bowser tasked the Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) to implement the Marion Barry Commission’s recommendations. CAH facilitated a competitive process to identify an artist to design, fabricate, and install a bronze sculpture in the likeness of the late mayor. CAH received a total of 13 submissions that were reviewed by a panel of artists, government officials, and community members before selecting Stephen Weitzman of Weitzman Studios as the final artist.

Kay Kendall stated that when the Barry Commission met with the community there was discussion about possible locations and that the John A. Wilson Building was the obvious choice. The sculpture is proposed to be installed at the John A. Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, facing Pennsylvania Avenue within the flower bed between the building’s entrance and 13-½ Street. CAH continues to discuss the selection of the specific location of the statue with the Mayor and Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia.

Espinoza presented the statue design that was selected with the support of the Executive Office of the Mayor, the office of Chairman Phil Mendelson of the Council of the District of Columbia, and the Marion Barry Commission. Espinoza stated that additional reviews are underway or have been completed. The concept was presented to the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) on April 20th;

CFA made recommendations that have been incorporated into what is being reviewed by the CWC. The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission reviewed the concept on May 16th and approved the design elements. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2C reviewed the concept on June 12th and unanimously passed a motion to support the project.

Espinoza introduced Steven Weitzman who presented the sculpture and its various elements. Weitzman stated that the site at the Wilson Building is near the existing electric sign to the left of the Pennsylvania Avenue entrance; the electric sign is to remain. He reviewed existing site conditions and shared pictures of the site.

Weitzman explained the concept of the statue. The statue is of Marion Barry greeting everyone as they arrive to the city. It is 8 feet from the top of Marion Barry's hand from the base. The base is a granite plinth 2 feet high, made of the same material as the building, and would be engraved with his name and birth and death years on the front and a quote and significant dates from his public service on the east- and west-facing sides of the base.

Lauren Vaughan asked if the statue is the same size as the statue of Boss Shephard that is located at the northwest corner of the Wilson Building. Weitzman stated that the statue is the same size as the Boss Shepherd statue, but that Boss Shepherd is on a base that is 4 feet high. The decision to place the Marion Barry statue on a lower base is intentional so that Mayor Barry is closer to the people.

Shaw asked if the location and font of the text on the base is where it will be most visible and could be used to show who Marion Barry really was. Weitzman stated the location of the statue was selected for its openness and visibility, and that the size of the base makes it difficult to have larger text. Shaw asked about the orientation of the base and the sides with the text. Espinoza stated that the location is right at the corner of a planter bed and very close to the sidewalk. Weitzman further explained that the plinth size relates to elements on the façade of the Wilson Building and that the statue's location is also near the side entrance that Marion Barry used to enter the building.

Marnique Heath stated she was not clear on the proposed location of the statue. Weitzman stated it was at the corner of the planter closest to the building on 13-1/2th Street and facing Pennsylvania Avenue. Heath asked if the text will be hard to see. Espinoza stated the plinth could be angled to make the text more visible.

Shaw stated he has a general concern about the readability of the quote and asked about any discussions that were had related to selecting the proposed site. Weitzman stated he believes in a philosophy that all information for a statue should not be revealed at once and likes the aspect of discovery regarding all information.

Sam Zimbabwe stated it was not clear where one would need to stand to read the inscription. Weitzman stated that the statue will be in the forefront of the flower bed so that it will be easy to read anything engraved on the sides.

Vaughan asked about using a different shape for the platform so that the quote will be seen by people as they walk by the statue, not requiring them to venture around the statue because there is no room and that there is nothing pointing people to the other side to see the quote. Kendall stated that the text on the plinth will be located on the sides not facing Pennsylvania Avenue. Weitzman also stated that additional bronze plaques with quotes could be added where they would be more visible, but that this would require a large surface for the text to be legible. Shaw stated that more thinking is needed on final placement of the statue to ensure maximum visibility.

There were several comments about the proposed text. Shaw stated that the wording (“Mayor for Life” followed by his birth/death years) made it sound as if Marion Barry had been the mayor of the city for his entire political career and that the words “Mayor for Life” should be in quotes. Espinoza said that the final text has not been fully approved by the Barry family. Sandy Allen stated that it should read, “Council of the District of Columbia” and not “DC Council.”

Brent Sisco asked about lighting of the statue. Espinoza stated that a separate lighting study will be done at a later time. Zimbabwe said that a lighting study should be done as part of site selection, because that may result in the statue being pushed back in the flower bed and make the text less visible.

Shaw asked about the source of the image used for depicting that pose of Marion Barry. Weitzman said that many images were reviewed and that there had been discussion of what age the statue should represent. Allen stated that the statue’s pose is from a specific photo of Marion Barry taken of him as he was leaving his home to regain his seat on Council of the District of Columbia and that it represented his return to public life. Weitzman stated that the time period the statue is intended to capture is from around 1990, not necessarily when he returned to public life.

Shaw asked about the proposed statue’s appropriate affectation of Marion Barry’s features as an African American male. Shaw explained he wanted to make sure the features of the statue are clearly African American and that the artist needs to study other bronze sculptures to identify a technique that will capture this correctly. Sisco stated that the features on the Carter G. Woodson statue at 9th and Rhode Island Avenue NW was done very well.

Shaw stated that more information on the typology would have been helpful. Weitzman explained that Times Roman is the proposed font and that he will send the actual fonts to Shaw for the record. Espinoza stated that this has been a fast moving project and that the plinth is a new element. Earlier schemes had included a platform, but at the request of the Commission of Fine Arts it had been changed to a plinth. Shaw asked if the wording would be engraved and Weitzman answered yes.

Shaw asked if there were any additional thoughts from the Committee and there were none. Shaw asked why the guideline for commemorating someone less than 10 years after they had been deceased should not be an issue. Shaheen stated that this commemorative work was based on the recommendation of the Marion Barry Commission that had proposed several options, and that the Mayor had determined this was the most appropriate way to honor Marion Barry.

Shaw stated that the CWC will send a letter to the Mayor letting her know of the Committee's decision, as well as a separate letter to CAH letting them know about the Committee's questions about the statue's design and placement. Sisco added that another question to raise is about the base and Vaughan added that the base should relate to the shape of the raised planter.

Shaw made a motion to approve the statue in the general location of the Wilson Building, noting the outstanding issues that need to be resolved. The CWC voted unanimously to support the motion.