

**SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING  
112 EAST STATE STREET**

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM**

**April 2, 2009**

**4:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**HSMC Members Present:**

**Walter Wright, Chairman  
Gordon Smith, Vice-Chairman  
Walt Harper  
Phillip Williams**

**HSMC Members Absent:**

**Joshua L. Ward**

**HSMC/MPC Staff Present:**

**Ellen Harris, Preservation Planner  
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant**

**City of Savannah Staff Present:**

**Michael Brown, City Manager  
Jenny Payne, Management Services Coordinator**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

**II. Petition of the Chatham County Veteran's Council  
File No.: C-050817-88954-2  
Concept Design Approval  
WWII Monument, River Street**

Present for the petition was Ms. Jenny Payne.

Ms. Harris gave the Staff report.

**NATURE OF REQUEST:** The petitioner is requesting revised design concept approval of the proposed World War II Monument on River Street to the west of the Hyatt. Previous actions were:

- August 24, 2005, the Historic Site and Monument Commission (HSMC) approved the theme of a WWII Monument.
- December 15, 2005, the HSMC approved Oglethorpe Square as the location for a WWII Monument.

- February 16, 2006, City Council approved Oglethorpe Square as the location for a WWII Monument.
- January 6, 2009, City Council approved River Street as the location for the WWII Monument and approved the concept of the “World Apart” with a representation of the different branches of the armed services.

While “Concept Design Approval” is not technically a part of the approval process as established in the Master Plan and Guidelines, with a project of this scale and magnitude, this interim step allows the petitioner to receive feedback and comments before proceeding with more detailed drawings.

## **FINDINGS:**

**Hemispheres:** The proposed monument will consist of a central element divided into two hemispheres to represent the world split apart during WWII and the two theaters of war. The hemispheres will be approximately 26 feet wide and 20 feet tall. The hemisphere will be constructed of cast bronze: the water represented by a blue patina bronze with a smooth finish and the land masses represented by a brown patina bronze with a textured finish. Placement of land masses, samples of bronze and other details will be submitted during the design detail phase.

Visitors will be able to walk through the center of the two hemispheres. There will be a five-foot wide open passage through the two hemispheres, tapering upwards and outwards. The walls of the passage will consist of an eight-foot tall granite wall. The names of fallen Chatham County soldiers will be engraved on these walls along side an image of the Purple Heart medal. Above the wall will be solid bronze and will have images of medals from the two theaters of war. Details of this interior passage will be submitted during the design detail phase. Both sides of the WWII Victory medal will be cast in bronze relief and inset in the paving in the floor of the hemispheres.

The “Victory Garden” consisting of low flowers will surround the two hemispheres at the base. A one-foot tall granite wall will enclose the Victory Garden and the two hemispheres.

**Flagpoles:** There will be three flagpoles to the south of the monument. These will fly the United States flag, the Georgia State flag, and the POW flag. They will be illuminated at night.

**Pedestals/Benches:** Along the planting beds adjacent to the monument there will be Georgia granite benches flanked by six granite pedestals. The pedestals will be 2’4” by 2’4” and will be 3’6” tall, at their tallest point. Each will feature the bronze seal or symbol of a military branch (Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Army Air Force, and Merchant Marines).

**Mosaic:** There will be a mosaic between the monument and the River with an image highlighting locations of key wartime production sites and cargo port facilities along the riverfront. The materials and exact text will be submitted during the design detail phase.

**Lighting:** Down lighting has been proposed for the interior to illuminate the names of the fallen soldiers. The flagpoles and exterior globe will also be illuminated. Details will be submitted during Design Detail phase.

**Paving:** The proposed design includes paving the area surrounding the two hemispheres with inscribed memorial bricks. The existing slate will be relocated and reused. Details of paving will be submitted during design detail phase.

**Landscaping:** The two existing square planters flanking each side of the monument will be reconfigured into triangles to provide more access to the monument. Additionally there will be a “Victory Garden” consisting of low flowers surrounding the hemispheres.

**Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the concept design.**

**Ms. Harris** stated that the Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the petition at their 11:00 a.m. meeting and they unanimously recommended approval of the design concept as submitted and recommended by Staff.

She read the following statement from Commission member Mr. Ward:

*“If the Veterans Council has not already done so, it would be very helpful that they provide a mission statement which describes their goals and purpose for this monument. This statement would help to solidify and strengthen their design. It would also serve as a guide during design and documentation phases for both them and the Historic Site and Monument Commission Board members. After reviewing the drawings it seems that the inclusion of the various metals is haphazard, it is unclear of their importance; the reason they are sized differently or why they are placed where they are shown. A primary concern I have is the placement of the two very large theatre metals on the upper portions of the globe. Judging from the isometric drawings these two metals will be impossible to see completely. At best you will be able to see them from a skewed perspective from a distance. Probably from the room of a hotel behind the monument. I would strongly reconsider their placement, size, and purpose. I believe that the general layout and orientation of the monument is strong. I also believe that the mosaic highlight in the key locations along the river is excellent, and I look forward to learning more about this feature and future petitions.”*

**Ms. Jenny Payne (Management Services Coordinator for the City of Savannah representing the Veterans Council)** stated that they went through an extensive planning process revising the previous concept design. She said that the site has moved from Oglethorpe Square to the river front and that there are significant historical reasons why the move was made. The monument site is next to the Hyatt and in front of the site are existing floating docks. Next to the floating docks is a timber fender system that is used for military ships that visit Savannah. This site is a natural place for the monument and follows the military line of monuments along the Bull Street corridor. The Veterans and City Council are in agreement with it.

She displayed the entire design concept and went through each element in detail. Details include the Theatres of War, a tribute to Chatham County’s fallen, military service and civilian tributes, and a representation of the local contribution.

**Mr. Bill Quinan (Chairman of the Veterans Council)** introduced the World War II committee; Mr. Jimmy Ray, Mr. Jim Vejar, Mr. Joe Cetti, Mr. Doug Andrews, Commissioner Helen Stone, and Mr. Eric Meyerhoff the architect. He said that they worked diligently with City staff to come up with a world class World War II monument in Savannah, and one they will be proud of to have visitors come and point out where family members might have fought. The monument includes Savannah's waterfront contribution to the War World II effort.

**Mr. Michael Brown (City of Savannah City Manager)** stated that they are proud to be part of the tradition of the monument, and it will give them a chance to reflect back on the restoration. He said that all monuments that turn out good are based on hard work and working out conflicts. Mr. White had said earlier that the process itself is reflected in the effort made by people in the war effort; that they died so that people would have the ability to use a democratic process to make decisions.

They took the previous minutes of the TAC and HSMC, staff's comments, and went to work on the project with ad hoc representatives like Mr. Lester Johnson, Sr., Mr. Steven High, and others. They took each element and went through a planning process. A core area of the process was to do historical research in the library by looking at all of the main venues of the World War effort. They found this site to be the most significant location for the city regarding World War II. It helped with the site planning process using Mr. Eric Meyerhoff's split globe design, along with the tenacity of the Veterans Council, and they continue to meet with the Veterans Council. They are asking for approval of Staff's recommendation although they recognize that there are some additional design details to be worked out. The design should be universal in symbol but specific to Savannah at the same time as they continue with the historical research with each branch of service. They are working with the materials, colors, etc., but it will be a great help if the Commission could give the design approval and come back with the design details or ask for a special meeting to get final approval. They have a tentative schedule, a good funding plan, and others who are ready to work on the funding, as soon as they receive design approval.

He sent a copy of the Staff report to the Mayor and Alderman but has not received any comments. He thinks that they will be very supportive because they said if the Veterans go to the waterfront, do the design homework, go back to the Site and Monument Commission, and then come back to them, it will send a strong message for approval. In addition to helping with the restoration of the monuments, each time they go through the process they learn more and will probably come back to make recommendations on how to strengthen the process to help reduce design conflicts and shorten the procedure. Today, they want the formal approval to go forward with the next step.

**Mr. Williams** stated that Mr. Ward made comments about details and that he would hold off on his comments for the detail stage.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**Mr. Kenny Hill (Director of the Savannah Waterfront Association)** stated that they are excited but humbled about the site for the World War II monument. He said that when they found out they were being considered they were excited, but there was some hesitation on the location. When they spoke to the merchants along River Street and the Veterans, this site was the number one choice. They feel that it joins the Olympic Torch, the Waving Girl, the African-American Slave monument, and the newer pieces like the S.S. Savannah monument, the maritime history panels, and "Dottie" the streetcar. It brings a

new element to River Street, a lot of sobriety, a connection to history, and they are delighted to be able to work with the Veterans and the City on this project.

**Mr. Smith** stated that Mr. Brown mentioned the process was long. He said there has been planning since the end of World War II. In 1946 Judge Arthur W. Solomon did a very detailed architectural drawing that was presented to the City to build a World War II memorial. It was a 98-foot-long replica of the S. S. Savannah, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic. It was a busy design and did not pass. In 1996 he worked with General Rosie Rosenbloom and other veterans as a World War II commemoration committee to get public enthusiasm for a monument, and after approximately one year it failed. Ms. Payne made a very fine presentation and he said that he submitted a lengthy document that outlined the various Chatham County units and hoped that all of them would be considered. They want to be all inclusive if given the parameters, and are happy that everyone is concerned.

**HSMC ACTION: Mr. Williams made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission approve the petition. Mr. Harper seconded the motion. Mr. Smith asked if there were any comments regarding the project.**

**Mr. Wright** stated that it is a huge improvement and he thanked and congratulated everyone.

**Mr. Harper** stated that he was for the monument when it was planned for Oglethorpe Square. He said that after presentations from the City Manager and others that the River Street location is better historically and demographically. When they do the design it should be something that would prevent skateboarders because he wouldn't want them to damage all of the work. It is a very good monument with a good design and didn't think they would have any problems getting it passed.

**Mr. Smith** seconded Mr. Harper's comments. He said in Chatham Square there is a small monument to a gentleman named Toomer who was a bank official in Savannah, and that years ago someone broke the gnomon off the sun dial. The City went through a great expense to replace the gnomon and it has been vandalized again. He hopes that they take it into consideration because he would hate to see anyone vandalize the World War II monument.

**Mr. Williams** stated that there was a time when each monument would be placed on a website and he asked if it is in place.

**Mr. Brown** stated that he didn't think it is but it is an easy thing to do. There are cities with some collections but they would be hard-pressed to find a city like Savannah with this kind of a collection of public art. They know that Mr. Meyerhoff has thought about the vandalism and how to discourage it. If it did occur they would make sure that they prosecute.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**III. Meeting Minutes - March 5, 2009**

**HSMC ACTION: Mr. Harper made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Wright seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**Mr. Wright** stated that Mr. Williams had a good idea regarding raising the globe a little.

**Mr. Williams** stated that it is a detail item.

**Mr. Wright** stated that they should get it to the committee to incorporate it into the design.

**Mr. Williams** said he thought that was what the meeting was about.

**Ms. Harris** stated she thought it will be taken into consideration. She said these things need to be said in a public forum and is why they have the public process.

**Mr. Williams** stated that his comments are more on a detail level and didn't think it is much to consider lifting. He said there are issues that are easy to fix in a detail stage.

**Ms. Harris** stated that when the drawings come back for final design approval they aren't going to want to come back and forth to get comments. She stated that if the Commission says it needs to be raised then it needs to be discussed as a whole group. If there are suggestions that the Commission is going to make they need to talk about them now.

**Mr. Smith** asked if it would be appropriate to open the floor for any suggestions from the Commission.

**Ms. Harris** answered yes and said that if they wanted to do that she needs to get the staff from the City so they can hear the suggestions.

**Mr. Smith** stated that the Commission could delay it and if they have individual suggestions to send them to Ms. Harris.

**Ms. Harris** stated that it needs to be discussed as a Commission. She said if Mr. Williams says he wants a flagpole placed on top of the globe and everyone else disagrees, then the City would have to hear it. It would have more weight coming from the Commission as a consensus.

**Mr. Smith** stated that the next meeting is on May 7<sup>th</sup> and it might be appropriate to be placed on the agenda for any Commission member to make suggestions on the details.

**Mr. Wright** stated that they are suggestions because the Commission does not mandate detail.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the suggestions could be taken into consideration at that time.

**Mr. Williams** stated that there is some tweaking that hasn't been done yet and that the Commission may not be getting the full picture. He said that the suggestions he has are minor and he would probably approve it like it is.

**Mr. Williams** stated that he did not know if it was the appropriate time because he was not sure. He said that his comments were more detail and less about the concept.

**Mr. Harper** stated that whoever looks at it could make their own interpretation. He said that the whole idea behind it is to make your own interpretation of what's going on. They don't need a plaque saying this is the Victory Garden or the pedestals and this is what they represent. It is all encompassing, part of the whole design, and you take away what it means to you.

**Mr. Williams** stated that a monument that is designed well wouldn't need interpretation but would be obvious. He said they know it's about a war but there is a lot going on and could be interpreted the wrong way.

**Mr. Harper** stated that if you look at the African-American monument it has a lot of symbolisms in it but they are not written out. He said you take away whatever it is that you want to take away.

**Ms. Harris** stated that she would collect their comments individually and provide them to the city.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris  
Preservation Planner

**EH/jnp**