



Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Virtual Meeting
February 3, 2022
4:00 PM
MINUTES

February 3, 2022 Historic Savannah Site & Monument Commission Meeting

Members Present: Kristopher Monroe, Chairman
Lisa Watson, Secretary
Eileen Baker
Sean Mannion

Member Absent: Ashley Rainge

Staff Present: Pamela Everett, Assistant Executive Director
Leah G. Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation
Monica Gann, Assistant Preservation Planner
Bri Morgan, Administrative Assistant
Julie Yawn, Systems Analyst

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

[1. Approve the January 6, 2022 Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 01.06.22 MEETING MINUTES.pdf](#)

Motion

Approve the January 2, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Eileen Baker

Second: Sean Mannion

Thomas Gensheimer - Not Present

Kristopher Monroe - Aye

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

Eileen Baker - Aye

Ashley Rainge - Not Present

III. Regular Agenda

- ☞ [Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)
- ☞ [Submittal Packet-narrative.pdf](#)
- ☞ [Submittal Packet-site plan with email.pdf](#)
- ☞ [Submittal Packet-site photos.pdf](#)
- ☞ [Submittal Packet - bench mock-up.pdf](#)
- ☞ [Alderman Support.pdf](#)
- ☞ [21-003594-HM bench mock-up.pdf](#)
- ☞ [21-003594-HM Commission Decision.pdf](#)

Ms. Monica Gann presented the petitioner's request of approval to install a granite memorial bench within Johnson Square on the corner of Bull and East Congress Streets.

The bench text is proposed as follows:

Top of the Bench: *"Celebrating 250 years of American Freedom
1776-2026"*

Front End of the Bench: *"The Sons of the American Revolution"*

Legs of the Bench: *"SAR"*

The primary theme is military history. In addition, the bench relates to local history, colonial history, and politics and government themes. The Sons of American Revolution previously placed a granite bench on MLK in Battlefield Park [file no. 21-003594-HM]. However, the text is different, and Staff has determined it meets the standard.

"Objects" are spaced to avoid crowding. The bench is proposed to be adjacent to a large Live Oak tree. Staff recommends that the applicant confirm with the City's GreenScapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots. The applicant indicated that 811 had been contacted the morning of January 19, 2022, to "scan the area" for utilities. Staff recommends that the applicant provide confirmation from the appropriate City Departments that the below ground utilities will not require removal or alteration.

The proposed site is large enough to accommodate the proposed bench. However, the Johnny Mercer bench is located adjacent to this proposed location approximately 20 feet to the east. Staff does not believe that the new bench will encroach on the existing bench.

Johnson Square is not utilized for special events on a regular basis. The bench is proposed to be internal to the square, away from the streets. The proposed site is a pedestrian traffic area and is adjacent to an existing sidewalk. The bench is adjacent to an existing sidewalk and is easily accessible. The bench is proposed within a City-owned square in an area with low growing plants which are typically easy to maintain. and will enhance an empty portion of the square. The bench is proposed to represent the entire city of Savannah. Johnson Square is the most central point of the Downtown.

The marker text size was not provided with the submittal packet. The bench is proposed to be granite, which is an enduring, non-corroding material.

The estimated cost of the proposed bench is \$2000 plus installation and is funded by Georgia Sons of the American Revolution, David Jessel, President. The escrow information was not provided with the submittal packet.

As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. As of the writing of this report, no comments were received from the public; however, an email was received from Alderman Leggett supporting the project.

Ms. Watson asked about the foundation.

Mr. Mannion asked how many benches are in Johnson Square. **Ms. Gann** stated only one (Johnny Mercer), the others are tall markers.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:

Mr. Trussell, petitioner, stated the bench is a reminder of accomplished history. He stated there will be brick under the bench to match the sidewalk and make ADA compatible.

Mr. Robert Billiard, area resident, spoke in favor of the petition. He stated there will be no problems with underground utilities; Staff cannot confirm that. He stated the petitioner will forward pictures of the 'flags' indicating utility check.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There was no public comment.

BOARD DISCUSSION:

There was concern about grass trampling because of small size of brick foundation. Mr. Trussell stated it will be 6 x 6.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council to install a granite memorial bench within Johnson Square on corner of Bull and East Congress Streets, with the following conditions, to be submitted to staff for final approval before the item can be docketed on a City Council agenda because the proposed work otherwise meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

- 1. Provide a determination that existing utilities will not be affected.**
- 2. Provide the text heights. Except the marker title, the marker text cannot be more than 1" in height, and not less than 1/2".**
- 3. Contact the Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, to determine the appropriate Escrow Payment.**

Motion

The Historic Site and Monument Commission motioned to APPROVE RECOMMENDATION to the Savannah City Council to install a granite memorial bench within Johnson Square on corner of Bull and East Congress Streets, with the following conditions to be submitted to staff for final approval before the item can be docketed on a City Council agenda because the proposed work otherwise meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

- 1) Provide a determination that existing utilities will not be affected.
- 2) Provide the text heights. Except the marker title, the marker text cannot be more than 1"; in height, and not less than 1/2";.

3) Contact the Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, to determine the appropriate Escrow Payment.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Lisa D. Watson

Thomas Gensheimer - Not Present

Kristopher Monroe - Abstain

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

Eileen Baker - Aye

Ashley Rainge - Not Present

IV. Other Business

[3. Nominating Committee to Announce Nominations for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary - Commission to Vote](#)

Mr. Mannion presented the Nominating Committee's nominations as:

Kristopher Monroe: Chair

Ashley Rainge: Vice Chair

Lisa Watson: Secretary

Ms. Rainge was absent from this meeting, therefore could not accept the nomination. The Board voted on the Chair and Secretary. Vice Chair will be voted upon at the next HSMC meeting.

Motion

Kristopher Monroe - Chair

Lisa Watson - Secretary

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Eileen Baker

Thomas Gensheimer - Not Present

Kristopher Monroe - Abstain

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

Eileen Baker - Aye

Ashley Rainge - Not Present

[4. Discuss Mural at Waters and Victory](#)

📎 [PXL_20220113_194555814.jpg](#)

Ms. Leah Michalak stated the original approved mural was painted on the building. It was painted over, then the mural reappeared on a board, attached to the building. Mr. Mannion

stated it was gone for approximately six to eight months, then reappeared with changes from the approval.

Ms. Everett stated if something different was painted after approval, it is a new mural.

Mr. Mannion stated since it does not meet the requirements, it needs to be applied for.

Ms. Watson stated they don't want to become mural cops, particularly if the public is not complaining. **Mr. Mannion** asked how to fill in the mural gap in the process. **Mr. Monroe** stated he could understand a petitioner thinking if they received an approval, it could be switched out.

Ms. Michalak suggested to make mural amendments/changes as a staff review. Will present at next HSMC meeting.

V. Adjournment

[5. Next meeting: March 3, 2022 at 4pm - Location TBD](#)

No applications at this time.

[6. Adjourn](#)

There being no further business to present before the Board, February 3, 2022 Historic Site and Monument Commission meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leah G. Michalak
Director, 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.