

## AGENDA # 2

City of Madison, Wisconsin

---

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 8/27/18

TITLE: 1 Speedway Rd - Exterior Alteration to a Designated Madison Landmark Site (Forest Hill Cemetery); 13th Ald. Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: William Fruhling, Acting Preservation Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 8/30/18

ID NUMBER: 52415

---

Members present were: Stuart Levitan, Anna Andrzejewski, Richard Arnesen, David McLean, and Marsha Rummel. Excused was Katie Kaliszewski.

### **SUMMARY:**

*Ulrike Dieterle, registering neither in support nor in opposition, and wishing to speak.*

*Leonard Cizewski, registering in support and wishing to speak.*

*Gerhard Pechmann, registering in opposition and wishing to speak.*

Dieterle said that she did not wish to support nor speak against the monument, but intended to voice her support for history in general. She stated that there are lessons we should draw from it, and should acknowledge not only the parts of history that we feel comfortable with, but also the parts that make us ashamed and feel regret. She said that we should draw lessons from the past that lead us to a better present and future, and allow us to say with conviction, never again. Lastly, she said that she hopes we can use the monument as a lesson, and mentioned including an interpretive sign that would discuss the Civil War as well as the effigy mounds in Forest Hill Cemetery.

Cizewski voiced his support for the marker being moved to a more appropriate location in the city. He said that this cenotaph is not in the historic tradition of cenotaphs, which he said traditionally memorialize those interred elsewhere. He pointed out that the marker duplicates the names that are already on individual gravestones. He said that moving the marker will not erase history because it will not be demolished or destroyed, and stated that the City seems committed to finding a historic place to host the marker. He mentioned that the marker is currently exposed to the elements and there is no money to maintain it, so it would be better to move it to a historical institution that would display and care for it.

Pechmann said that he owns a memorial company in Madison, and referenced a letter that he previously sent to the Commission on this matter. He said that the individual markers are marble, and they will not be there forever because they are deteriorating. He stated that the large marker is made with one of the best types of granite in the world, and the hand-engraved lettering will be there forever. He estimated the replacement cost of the monument to be approximately \$35,000. He said that the individual marble markers are not actually marking the individual graves of the soldiers. He suggested that any unwanted or offensive lettering could be ground down and polished as an easy fix, but stated that the monument should remain there because the marble of the existing grave markers will not last. Levitan asked how long he estimates the marble markers will remain, and Pechmann said that he estimates 200-300 years, though the names will wear off sooner. Levitan then asked about his statement that individual graves were not accurately designated with the individual

marble gravestones. Pechmann said that individual graves were dug, but the markers were not accurately placed on each individual; there is a map of the cemetery, but it does not depict who is buried where. Lisa Laschinger, Parks Division, stated that there is some ambiguity on the type of graves that exist, and they do not know whether it was a mass grave or individual graves.

Cizewski said that Senator Johnson's office has confirmed that the individual headstones were supplied by the National Cemetery Commission, which is now Veterans Affairs, who have stated that they have taken responsibility for the Confederate Prisoners of War in the North and will replace the headstones in Forest Hill. Cizewski said that the Parks Division is aware of this and is attempting to establish a relationship with the VA because the stones are deteriorating. Laschinger said that legislative file 48643 contains a lot of historic documents and newspaper articles from when the individual headstones were placed, as well as from when the marker was placed. Rummel asked if the Parks Division is aware of the offer from the VA that Cizewski mentioned. Laschinger stated that they have heard that it may be a potential option; however, they have not reached out to the VA yet, so it has not been verified.

McLean asked Laschinger if she could provide any background on the climate or people's reactions at the time that the large marker was installed. Laschinger said that she did not know, but in the legislative file, there are newspaper articles relating to the installation of the large marker.

McLean said that he would choose to sit with history as opposed to removing things. He stated that the marker is in a historic place and was put there many years ago, not in the current political climate. He indicated that he does not think that any lettering on the large marker should be ground off or removed because it is all part of the story. He said that time does erase history by erasing the names off of the marble gravestones; history had forgotten those people until years later when someone put the marker there so their names would not be forgotten.

Rummel stated that she was in the minority in previous votes because she supported allowing the removal of the marker. She referenced the standards about what is considered detrimental to the public interest, and noted that it is a profound question we are currently facing in this country. She said that the marker is an emblem of the whitewashing of history that the United Daughters of the Confederacy engaged in across the country in order to glorify slavery and the unsung heroes of the movement. She stated that in this case, the losers wrote the history, but the dynamic of who is writing the history is changing now. She also mentioned that the historic landmark is the cemetery, not this particular element within the cemetery. She said that the soldiers aren't going anywhere, and if the marker is removed, there will be an obligation to restore the individual markers so that the names are legible and those who are buried there can be respected.

Levitan asked Laschinger if there is a list of the interred remains at the Parks Division or the Forest Hill Cemetery office. Laschinger responded that there is a cemetery database that is searchable online, and within the cemetery, they also have a complete listing of everyone buried there. Levitan asked how often those records are accessed by the public, and Laschinger did not know.

Andrzejewski said that this topic has been discussed for the last year, and she has been struck by the conversations about what is history and what is not. She stated that it is true that history changes in the sense of the stories that we tell; we do tell different histories, and what happened last year in Charlottesville and the continued public discussions and debates of what history is are interesting to her. She said that we are in control of our history. She stated that as an architectural historian interested in how we tell history through material things, when we remove materials or erase phrases, we are limiting the stories people can tell in the future. She said that we can take a picture, but we can never get it back. She expressed her interest in the placement of the 1906 marker in relation to the park itself and to the gravestones and Native American mounds. She said that we can move the marker, but for someone who is interested in telling history on the basis of physical things, it would change what histories people can tell in the future. She noted that she is not speaking about how she feels, but is speaking on the basis of her expertise on material culture and evaluating that relative to the specific city ordinances and Secretary of the Interior's Standards. She said that this moment

is extremely important that we are having these debates; we need to keep having them, but she is concerned that removing the marker limits continuing to have those discussions in the future.

Arnesen said that he agrees with Andrzejewski's comments, and hasn't seen anything that would change his mind. He stated that if the marker is removed, it would be odd to add an interpretive sign because it will be referencing something that is no longer there.

Levitan stated that he had previously supported retaining the marker, but after listening to the Common Council debate, he understood another perspective. He said that while the marker does not refer to unsung heroes, the lost cause, nor extol the Confederacy, it is still a big piece of marble that in itself is celebratory of people who waged treasonous war against the United States in support of slavery. He made an analogy to WWII and said that if any of the German prisoners of war who were in Wisconsin would have died during that time, it would be inconceivable to put a swastika up in a municipal cemetery. He said that Andrzejewski's comments regarding the importance of the ordinance are valid, and Amy Scanlon's staff report is true to the ordinance, but the public interest has changed and is different than it was two years ago. He expressed the importance of adding an interpretive sign because there is currently nothing there to explain why Confederate Rest exists; a sign would provide an explanation and also respect the graves of the dead without celebrating the cause for which they fought. He again stated that the marker is celebratory by its sheer mass, and this solution to the current controversy would be most in the public interest.

McLean said that the swastika analogy would be valid if the marker had a Confederate flag on it, but it is just names, so it is not quite as celebratory. If there were insignia or flags, it would be a different conversation. He pointed out that this was the reason that the small plaque was removed, and there was very little argument about it. He said that a casual observer likely wouldn't seek out the database or list of names of the interred, and an interpretive sign likely wouldn't include names. If the marker were taken away, names would need to be added to the interpretive sign or new headstones would be needed; we can't just erase the names. In response to the comment about the losers rewriting history, he said that we can still rewrite it by keeping everything there as it is and writing it as we know it based on what we have learned through the years as right and wrong, and specifically addressing the text on the bottom of the marker as well as current events that have sparked debates across the nation. Regarding public frustration, he referenced the many public comments they have received, and said that people seem to be more frustrated by the removal of the marker.

Rummel read from standard three of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and said that if the historic preservation ordinance had been in place in 1909, they would not have allowed this marker because it creates a false sense of historical development. She said that over time, our stories change and we may lose some stories, but maybe that is okay; we need better stories so that everyone is included. We need to look at what we did and take ownership of our past.

Andrzejewski said that she had read standard three differently, and she thought it was designed to be more flexible. Arnesen gave the example that if a building from the late 1800s was modified in the 1920s, and later determined to be historic, one should not go back and erase the modifications from the '20s in order to get it back to its original state; it is all part of the history of the building. Andrzejewski agreed and said that history becomes historical and we can't make judgments retroactively about what is historic.

Levitan argued that Rummel's point was valid, and if there were a Landmarks Commission and the standards had been enforced in 1909, they would not have approved the installation of the marker.

Arnesen said that one cannot remove built pieces of historic buildings that were previously additions, but are considered historic now. The marker was added to the cemetery and became part of the history, which is why it should not be removed. Levitan reiterated Rummel's statement that the marker would not have been approved in 1909. Arnesen agreed that it likely would not have been approved, but did not think that point was relevant to the current discussion. Andrzejewski said that as a historian, she didn't think that you can project that back.

A motion was made by Rummel to approve the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the historic communal marker. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Levitan said that under ordinance 33.19, the Landmarks Commission has independent authority to work with the Parks Division regarding the installation of an interpretive sign. Laschinger confirmed that the request to install an interpretive sign would need to go before the Board of Parks Commissioners.

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by McLean, to deny the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of the historic communal marker and to request that the Board of Parks Commissioners approve the installation of an interpretive sign explaining the history of Confederate Rest and the Native American burial mounds.

Andrzejewski referenced relevant ordinances, including 41.09, 41.18, and 41.18(1)(d) specifically when explaining why she would vote in favor of this motion. She said that the historic communal marker has acquired historic significance in its own right, and in relation to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards (notably standards two, three, and five), removal of the marker fails. She said that removing something permanently and altering the landscape, which we use to tell history, frustrates the public interest. She also referenced the staff report statement that the Landmarks Commission discusses public interest as it relates to historic resources, and the Common Council is able to view the public interest more broadly.

Rummel made the argument that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards could actually be argued in the opposite way from how Andrzejewski discussed them. She asked the group what they thought about the earlier suggestion to remove the offending language from the marker. Arnesen said he would not be in favor of that. McLean agreed and said that piece is crucial to keep and explain on the interpretive sign in order to learn from our history and not repeat it.

### **ACTION:**

**A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by McLean, to deny the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of the historic communal marker and to request that the Board of Parks Commissioners approve the installation of an interpretive sign explaining the history of Confederate Rest and the Native American burial mounds. The motion passed by voice vote, with Rummel voting opposed.**