

Memorandum

To: Downtown Coordinating Committee
CC: Office of the Mayor, Madison Common Council, Rebecca Cnare, Bill Fruhling
From: Barbara Schrank on behalf of the Madison Arts Commission
Date: 4/16/2015
Re: Philosophers' Stones

At the April 14, 2015 Madison Arts Commission (MAC) meeting, commissioners voted to approve the plans and specifications for modifications to the area popularly called Philosophers' Grove located on the 100 Block of West Mifflin Street. Philosophers' Grove serves as an anchor for a large-scale public art installation called Philosophers' Stones, which is a central and beloved part of the overall design for State Street. The street redesign and the public art installation followed thousands of hours of committee and community work. Despite approving the modifications, MAC members are concerned that discussions about negative behavior by a small number of people at this site focused on removal of public art as part of the solution.

By our vote, MAC supports the compromise solution put forth by the Downtown Coordinating Committee. However, a number of commissioners expressed doubt that removing 11 stones will do anything to address the underlying behavior problems in the area. We understand that this is indeed a compromise solution reached through an extensive process and in consultation with the artist.

However, with that said, MAC would like to put forth the following recommendations:

1. That the City of Madison adopt deaccession procedures that are as stringent and fair as the process for acquisition, and this policy become an adopted part of the City's Public Art Framework. This will ensure that artwork is not deaccessioned due to changes in fashion, taste, administration, or the immediate pressures of public controversy.
2. That funding for programming in the area is linked to increased social services, security, and enforcement to enhance the likelihood that the underlying issue (negative behavior) is actually addressed. Because a public art installation is being modified, it is critical that the intended objectives for the site are achieved.

Sincerely,



Commissioners of the Madison Arts Commission
Barbara Schrank, Chair