

Stu: [Sent by e-mail attachment, 1-13-2019 Sent again, with revisions, 1-16-2019]

As noted in an e-mail sent yesterday (1-12), I was well along in a letter to you outlining at length why I took the stance I did regarding removal of the cenotaph in Confederates Rest and your remaining as chair of the city's Landmarks Committee. It was then that I received the imperative message from you that my time was running out to offer an apology for what you regarded as my offensive and inaccurate remarks, so, like my entry into the Publishers Clearing House "Five Thousand Dollars for Life!" I dropped that longer missive and am rushing this to completion to meet your deadline.

1. I again apologize to you, as a recipient of my mid-April letter to Alder Shiva Bidar-Sielaff regarding the City Council's decision to remove the Daughters of the Confederacy donated cenotaph in the Confederates Rest portion of the city's Forest Hills Cemetery and leave the site unmarked. As noted, while I still warmly support the concerns put forth in that letter, it was written in a most uncivil way which was unhelpful to the cause it supported. I have also sent a letter of public apology to those who received my original.
2. On the question of my offering an apology to you, the answer is "perhaps." As Chair of the Madison Landmarks Commission, you serve in a quasi-public position, and in this role you are subject to praise or condemnation as may be perceived by those whom you serve. As a citizen of the city, it is well within my purview to offer the Commission advice, and to praise or decry the decisions made by the Commission and its Chair, as I may determine. *

I interpret the function of the Madison Landmarks Commission to be to encourage preservation of portions of the physical fabric of the city, both to record its development over time and, in certain cases, to advocate for the preservation of a building or monument as an important work of art. In this capacity the commission often makes judgements about the preservation of structures and other objects in the face of a considerable effort to remove them, either because the site is in demand for redevelopment or because some other social imperative presses for it. While most of what's constructed in the city comes and goes without notice, when called upon to make a landmarking (preservation) decision the Landmarks Commission should take the long view. Consider this as the structural equivalent to the legal principal of "innocent until proven guilty." The building or artifact should be considered as an important element of the historical fabric of the city until it can be demonstrated that to retain it is of lesser worth than that which may replace it (including the fact that nothing may replace it).

The reason for this preservation is to demonstrate the development of the city over time not only as a historical creation, but in an "aesthetic" manner as well. Using aesthetic in its original Greek meaning as perceptible to the senses, this means preservation in such a way as to be directly available to touch and sight, an object in space seen both as a creation of a certain time, but also as physical and dimensional, something which is here today. I regard the preservation of this "dimensionality" as becoming ever more important as our cultural perception comes under the increasing domination of that planar structure, "the screen," from cell phone to Imax.

3. So, how does all of this address my call (made only to you) for your resignation? I believe that you have outlined this yourself in the notes you sent me that I gather accompanied a "slide lecture" on the monument in Confederates Rest you presented some months ago. In that talk, you note that given the strongly historical nature of the granite cenotaph, "Landmarks did its job correctly in rejecting the Parks request to remove the monument." Then, after looking at the current state of our government and hearing Alder Barbara Harrington-McKinney, a woman of color, speak passionately about this issue, you enjoyed an epiphany, and drawing on William Faulkner's

concepts about the past never really passing, saw that there was great inequity here, and that this imparity could only be addressed by removing a piece of history, and in so doing diminishing history rather than interpreting it. Here is your quote:

And when white supremacists are running the federal government, and there are Klansmen and Nazis marching openly in the streets, and bringing weapons of war into our churches and synagogues, things that were once acceptable just aren't any more. The great southern writer William Faulkner famously said the past isn't dead – it isn't even past. When the civil war was safely in the past, we judged this monument by the meaning it had in the past. But now those who lost that war say it's not in the past, and want to fight it again, today – so that means we can use today's standards to determine what this monument means.

Dead rebel soldiers are entitled to have their graves respected, their area maintained and their names properly catalogued. But they are not entitled to a four-ton, five-foot high granite monument, which by its placement and mass is inherently celebratory. Not while there are slaves in graves with no stones at all – if they were even given a grave.

Now I have to admit that I was slow in understanding this. And that it wasn't until I sat and listened to the council debate, and especially Alder McKinney, that I got it and understood that, in the context of these times, the broader public interest requires an affirmative renunciation of the Confederate cause, namely removing the monument.

4. In doing this, Stu, I believe that you have folded to the social pressures of the time rather than resisting them. There is no question here of the injustices that have been done in the past, but do two wrongs make a right? What I see now is that Madison has simply hauled that thing away, thrown a blanket over the whole issue and hopes it all goes away, while at the same time complimenting itself on its liberal virtuosity.
5. In light of this destruction, you might have considered resignation from your position, but chose compliance instead. I believe that you should have acknowledged the wrongs here, but then stood up and supported your mandate to preserve this very important piece of the fabric of the city, while at the same time working to explicate the issue through, at least, proper interpretive signage which would: 1) review the history of this plot; 2) list the names of those buried here as about twenty percent of them are now illegible on the headstones placed in 1909; 3) tell the compassionate story of Alice Waterman and “her boys,” and what she did—for 30 years(!) and in the face of indifference (at best); 4) Make reference the present brouhaha.

Drawing on my experience trying to explain “art” in the various museums around the country where I have worked, I know the benefits that come from a well written text. Further, there are two important Civil War plots here. One has a sign; the other is now completely unidentified. Where is our fabled Madison “parity”? And where is that equally fabled “Madison teaching moment?” Both have been swept under that blanket. Right now what stands in Forest Hills Cemetery is a blank. Given the priorities of space and the indifference we seem to be

exhibiting (possibly well tinged with “liberal embarrassment”), why not dig up any bits and pieces of these soldiers that remain and send them back south? That would clear the air, clear the ground, and might clear our consciences.

6. So, Stu, what to do? What’s done is done. The city has destroyed a piece of history, an act of destruction which you supported. I note your call for proper signage here, and that is important, but the historical fabric has been torn, and names (and identities) have been expunged, at least from easy grasp. So, let me propose this: In the spring, fresh winds may, just may, blow through City Hall. Let the matter rest for a bit while keeping an eye on Washington, but I believe that what goes on there should not cause us to falter here. At an appropriate time, some months down the road, and assuming changes in city government, make another pitch for proper signage of Confederates Rest. I call your attention, again, to the last sentence of a previous message to you, as well as a comment in my disgraced April letter. I will make a significant donation (at least for me) and will work to solicit other donations to create a sign with suitable text and of proper structure to mark Confederates Rest as a properly landmarked monument in the City of Madison.

Tom Garver

*Stu, given the bitter *ad hominem* attacks that pass for political criticism these days, I wish to say that my remarks here are addressed to you only in your capacity of Chair of the Madison Landmarks Commission. Based on my long term knowledge of your work, I regard you as a person of sturdy character, vast knowledge and truly remarkable achievement. On the latter point, after reading parts of Madison in the Sixties online, I’m happy to say that I have just ordered a copy and look forward to reading it.

From: [Bailey, Heather](#)
To: "Stu Levitan"; [Thomas Garver](#)
Cc: [Scanlon, Amy](#); [Anna Andrzejewski](#); [Rummel, Marsha](#); [Rich Arnesen](#); [David McLean](#); [Katie Kaliszewski](#); [Fruhling, William](#)
Subject: RE: Confederates Rest
Date: Monday, January 14, 2019 10:32:34 AM

It will be included in the file.

Heather



Heather L. Bailey, Ph.D.

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From: Stu Levitan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 14, 2019 9:35 AM
To: Thomas Garver <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Bailey, Heather <Hbailey@cityofmadison.com>; Scanlon, Amy <AScanlon@cityofmadison.com>; Anna Andrzejewski <[REDACTED]>; Rummel, Marsha <district6@cityofmadison.com>; Rich Arnesen <[REDACTED]>; David McLean <[REDACTED]>; Katie Kaliszewski <[REDACTED]>; Fruhling, William <WFruhling@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Re: Confederates Rest

Mr. Garver:

The next time you feel the need to send abusive correspondence to the chair of a city commission because of something you think the commission did, you might want to confirm that what you're so upset about really happened.

The Landmarks Commission consistently opposed removal of the monument, and consistently supported erection of an explanatory sign. It was the Common Council that directed the removal of the monument.

I respectfully decline your request that I resign.

Sincerely,

Stu Levitan
Chair, Landmarks Commission

Heather, please include this correspondence in the file for Legistar #48643.
Thanks.

On Saturday, January 12, 2019, 11:00:37 AM CST, Thomas Garver <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Stu:

I didn't realize that my next communication with you was on a schedule. Let me say that I do apologize to you for the uncivil tenor of my letter to Shiva Bidar-Sielaff, a copy of which was sent to you. While the thoughts expressed in that letter remain unchanged, I deeply regret its tenor and apologize for the manner in which my thoughts and concerns had been phrased.

This whole matter has demanded a much more extended and contemplative review of my thinking. My missive to you is a bit more than half done. I don't know if you will regard it as an apology or not. I can only speak for the thoughts of the sender, not those of the recipient.

I also note that I have had no response from you regarding the questions I raised in my previous message, nor my later query where I asked you to identify the "factual errors" in that message. My response should be complete by Monday, and because it is long, I would like to send it by mail so I would appreciate having a good mailing address for you.

Stu, I also want to remind you again of the last sentence of my last message, quoted herewith: *If the Landmarks Commission will agree to and support the creation and installation of a sign that would be both politically and structurally correct, I would be a contributor to the project as well as working vigorously to see this effectuated in a timely manner.*

I have strong feelings about this issue and regard the city as having acted very badly here.

You will receive my response shortly.

Tom

On Fri, Jan 11, 2019 at 8:41 PM Stu Levitan <[REDACTED]> wrote:

running out of time for your apology, tom

On Thursday, January 10, 2019, 11:24:29 PM CST, Thomas Garver <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Stu:

Garver here. You have not acted well in this situation, which has been most disappointing.

If my letter is factually incorrect I would welcome an indication of where I have made errors.

I shall read your "full report" tomorrow.

I remind you of the last sentence in my comments to you (which have been sent to you alone).

Tom

On Thu, Jan 10, 2019 at 8:44 PM Stu Levitan <[REDACTED]> wrote:

BTW, Tom, your letter is insulting and factually incorrect.

On Thursday, January 10, 2019, 8:00:12 PM CST, Stu Levitan <[REDACTED]> wrote:

My full statement on the issue.

On Thursday, January 10, 2019, 7:50:34 PM CST, Thomas Garver <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Stu:

Tom Garver here. I note with dismay that the Daughters of the Confederacy stone monolith which listed the names of the soldiers buried in Forest Hill Cemetery's Confederate Rest Section has been removed.

May I say Stu, that in encouraging the removal of a landmark rather than preserving one, you have abrogated the responsibility of your office as Chair of the city's Landmarks Commission to the point where you should do the only decent thing and resign from your position. You have failed to guide the Landmarks Commission in serving its mandate to the city, and to history in a much wider sense as well.

You have exhibited what might be called "an excess of liberal zeal," which is as offensive and destructive as any excess of conservative zeal would be. How do you justify the removal of a grave marker (not an overbearing figurative monument demonstrating "white supremacy") when this action not only destroys history but also obliterates the individual identities of at least 30 of the men buried there because their individual grave markers are weathered to the point of illegibility?

Here are three more questions for which I seek answers from you individually or from the Landmarks Commission:

Does the Landmarks Commission have any interest in identifying the elements that make this a Madison Landmark (and a unique one) including the fact that a civilian woman is buried with these soldiers?

Having found the donor of the marking stone to be unacceptable to Madison's modern sensibilities, does the Landmarks Commission regard it as important or within its purview to preserve the identity of the persons buried here in some manner which would be as easily accessible to the public as the stone that has been removed?

And, is the Landmarks Commission willing to support the creation of some form of interpretive sign, with a text prepared by competent historians which might be acceptable to a majority of the people reading it? Say, a sign similar to the one that has marked the Union soldiers grave site a short distance away for years.

I look forward to receiving your answers, which I hope will be direct and with a minimum of political obfuscation and bloviation.

In conclusion, let me say here what I have said to you personally. If the Landmarks Commission will agree to and support the creation and installation of a sign that would be both politically and structurally correct, I would be a contributor to the project as well as working vigorously to see this effectuated in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Tom Garver