

MEMORANDUM

July 30, 2015

TO: County Council

FROM: George Leventhal, Council President

SUBJECT: Confederate Statue

As I previously indicated to you, I asked Marlene Michaelson to convene a group of interested stakeholders to meet on the future of the Confederate statue. A summary of their meeting is attached, and this memorandum proposes my suggestions for next steps.

First, I want to thank the group members for their helpful participation. Our staff indicates that it was at times a difficult conversation, but that group members listened to each other's points of view and most were open to considering alternatives that they may not have initially thought were acceptable. I have confidence that we are an enlightened community that can address challenging issues in a responsible manner through civil discussions. We may not be able to identify a solution that achieves unanimous agreement, but I hope we can identify one that gains broad acceptance, and Monday's meeting was an important first step.

The report includes three important points on which the group was able to reach consensus, summarized below:

1. The story of Montgomery County's participation in the Civil War must be told, but it must be fully told from all perspectives, including those of both Confederate and Union supporters, as well as free blacks and slaves.
2. The County must take some action because the status quo (leaving the statue where it is without any change) does not fully tell the story of the County's history from all perspectives.
3. If a decision is made to move the statue, an appropriate location with a willing recipient must be identified with broad public input.

Having read all the comments received by the Council, listened remotely to the Rockville public forum on this issue, and read the report from the working group, **I support the County Executive's recommendation to relocate the statue. I further believe it should be placed in an appropriate location with new interpretive information that fully tells – from all perspectives – what happened in Montgomery County during the Civil War and at the time the statue was constructed.** Our goal should not be to erase history, but to gain a better and deeper understanding that reflects a variety of perspectives.

Potential next steps are as follows:

1. Ask our staff to work with historic preservation staff in the County and City of Rockville and interested parties to identify viable sites to relocate the statue.
2. Determine how public input can be solicited once viable sites have been identified, to determine which site is preferable.
3. The County should apply to the Rockville Historic District Commission to obtain a Certificate of Approval to relocate the statue. County Executive Leggett has tasked Bonnie Kirkland with assembling this application and presenting it to the Commission.
4. Task the historic preservation staff in the County (and City if it is located in the City) with developing appropriate interpretive information that can be placed with the statue at its new location and determining how to more comprehensively share information regarding the County during the Civil War and in the early part of the 20th century.
5. Ask the County Executive to take whatever action is necessary to protect the statue from further vandalism until it can be relocated.

Because the Council will not meet again until September, we will not have the opportunity to discuss this in a public forum. Unless I hear differently from you, I will ask Marlene to work with the executive branch to carry out the steps suggested above. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns.