

# **SUMMARY OF MEETING REGARDING POTENTIAL SITES TO RELOCATE THE ROCKVILLE CONFEDERATE MONUMENT**

August 11, 2015

In July 2015, Council staff met with a group of individuals to discuss options related to the Confederate statue in Rockville. Based on the group's discussions and other information received from County constituents, the Council President indicated in a memorandum to his colleagues the following:

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.

The Council President asked Council staff to convene additional meetings to discuss potential locations for the Confederate Statue and staff invited the following individuals, each of whom was able to attend a meeting on August 11, 2015:

Timothy Chesnutt, Director of Recreation and Parks, City of Rockville  
Anthony Cohen, President, Menare Foundation and Button Farm  
Bonnie Kirkland, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive  
Jamie Kuhns, Senior Historian, M-NCPPC  
Joey Lampl, Cultural Resources Manager, M-NCPPC  
Matthew Logan, Executive Director, Montgomery History  
Joy Nurmi, Special Assistant to the County Executive  
Nancy Pickard, Executive Director, Peerless Rockville  
Anita Powell, President of the Montgomery County Maryland Branch NAACP  
Laurie-Anne Sayles, President, African American Democratic Club of Montgomery County  
Scott Whipple, Supervisor of Historic Preservation Unit, M-NCPPC

Lisa Mandel-Trupp, Chief of Staff for Councilmember Sidney Katz, attended the meeting as an observer. Attendance at the meeting did not mean that the individuals supported relocating the statue; representatives of historic groups indicated that they still preferred that it be maintained at its current location with new interpretive information. Staff from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) identified potential park sites in response to a request from Council staff to do so, but this does not mean they support relocation of the statue to any of these park sites. Rockville and M-NCPPC staff were speaking as staff and not representing the Council or the Commission.

## **Group Comments**

The group agreed with the recommendation of the earlier working group that, once relocated, the statue should be placed in a display that would fully tell the story of the County's history from all perspectives, including those of both Confederate and Union supporters, as well as free blacks and slaves. Such a display should span the years from the Civil War through 1913, when the statue was constructed.

The group generally discussed whether the statue should be relocated on public or private land and Executive Staff indicated that the Executive preferred it not be on County land, but he has not reached any decisions regarding potential locations. The group identified three potential problems with private sites:

- there do not appear to be many options,
- it is possible that a private owner would choose not to provide public access (and those who wish to teach/learn about the County's history would no longer be able to use the statue for those purposes), and
- the government would lose control over how the statue is displayed and it is possible that it could be displayed in a way that some people would find offensive.

Group members recognized that it might be difficult, but not impossible, to find a private site that would provide public access and display the statue in an appropriate manner, but that it would worthwhile to continue to explore options.

In the course of discussions about different sites, group members agreed that interpretive signs in Rockville needed to be updated (regardless of whether the statue is still there) and those who had visited the Darnestown Heritage Park complimented M-NCPPC on the quality of the interpretive signs at that park and suggested they could be a model for new interpretive signs in Rockville.

Some group members wanted to revisit whether there was an appropriate way to retain the statue at its current location with better and more comprehensive interpretive elements. Some suggested transferring the land it is on to one of the historical non-profit organizations so that it is no longer on County land. Since the Council President had already recommended that the statue be relocated (and no other Councilmember advocated retaining it at its current location), Council staff tabled that conversation and indicated that those who hoped to change Councilmembers' minds on this issue should contact them directly representing their organizations and/or groups. They will also have the opportunity to testify before the Rockville Historic District Commission.

## **Sites Considered**

Options considered by the Group include the following sites:

1. Beall-Dawson Historical Park
2. Rockville Veterans Park
3. Rockville Civic Center
4. Woodlawn Manor Cultural Park
5. Darnestown Square Heritage Park
6. Joseph White House
7. Calithea Farm
8. Jesup Blair Local Park
9. Battery Bailey/Westmoreland Hills Local Park
10. Dickerson Conservation Park

11. Blockhouse Point Conservation Park
12. Monocacy Cemetery
13. Returning the statue to the United Daughters of the Confederacy or a similar organization (e.g., Sons of Confederate Veterans)
14. Donating the statue to the new National Museum of African American History and Culture on the mall.

The group discussed the advantages and disadvantages of different sites and potential criteria that could be used to decide among sites. Although the group did not endorse a specific list of criteria, suggestions for potential criteria included space to allow a full display that would present history from all perspectives, the ability to allow active interpretation (e.g., tours), existing historical displays, a connection to historical events, along/near a historical trail, designation as a site for a future historical interpretive facility, proximity to other displays/museums, retaining it in Rockville nears its current location, a location close to a busy area with significant foot traffic and the opportunity for many people to see it – or the opposite – a remote location so that only those who make a conscious effort are likely to see it.

### **Potentially Viable Sites**

The group narrowed the list of options to five alternatives and ruled out each of the other sites as being an unsuitable location for the statue. The five locations are as follows:

1. Beall-Dawson Historical Park
2. Darnestown Square Heritage Park
3. Calithea Farm special Park
4. Jesup Blair Local Park
5. Returning the statue to the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) or a similar organization (e.g., Sons of Confederate Veterans – SCV)

Although the concept of donating it to the new National Museum of African American History and Culture was not ruled out, this appeared to be a less feasible option and therefore was not included in the list.

### **Next Steps**

Before making this list publicly available for comments, group members will tell Council staff what additional information they believe is important to include with any descriptions of the sites to be publicly circulated. In addition, Anthony Cohen agreed to contact representatives of the UDC and SCV to determine whether they might be willing to accept the statue and if they would have a suitable location for it. The goal is to continue to compile information that can be made public no later than the last week in August.