


# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 29, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON THE DESIGN PROCESS OF THE PROPOSED PUBLIC ART COMPONENT OF THE CONTRABANDS AND FREEDMEN'S CEMETERY MEMORIAL

**ISSUE:** Status Report on the design process of the proposed public art component of the Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial and creation of a City Manager appointed selection panel.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council authorize the City Manager to appoint a Selection Panel, with membership as outlined in this report, to oversee the design process.

**BACKGROUND:** The Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial is a sacred site dedicated to honoring the more than 1,800 people of African descent who were buried in the cemetery during and immediately following the Civil War. The memorial will be a solemn and reverent place, offering opportunities for reflection, commemoration, education, and the search for cultural identity. The memorial will educate visitors about the courageous struggles of the thousands of contrabands and freedmen who sought refuge in Alexandria.

During the design competition process for the Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial, the Steering Committee recommended the placement of a sculptural element within the design of the Memorial. The artwork will serve as part of the memorial to the freed and escaped slaves and their children buried in the cemetery and as a place to pay our respect to those who did not live long in freedom. The artwork will represent the men, women and children buried in the cemetery and will convey the hopes, conditions and realities of the freed peoples.

**DISCUSSION:** The construction of the cemetery is anticipated to begin around the end of 2010 and be completed in 2011. The artwork is anticipated to be completed and installed within the construction time line.

The design process will include a public art competition which will be widely advertised. The competition and process will be similar to that used for the Rocky Versace Memorial, the Charles Houston Memorial Public Art Project and the Police Memorial.

A Selection Panel (“Panel”) made up of stakeholders and experts in design and art appointed by the City Manager would conduct the search for qualified artists through a widely distributed Request for Qualifications.

The Panel would include:

- Two representatives of Friends of Contrabands and Freedmen’s Cemetery
- One member of a Descendant Family
- One representative of the Old Town/Hunting Creek Civic Association
- One representative of the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage
- One representative of the Alexandria Historical Society
- One representative of the Public Art Committee/Arts Commission
- One Professional Sculptor/Artist
- One Architect/Landscape Architect
- One Historian
- One Design Professional

The Panel will evaluate applicants’ qualifications and three semi-finalists will be selected. Each semi-finalist will receive a \$2,000 stipend to develop a concept model for the public art. The semi-finalists will be expected to present their proposals to the Selection Panel.

The City Manager will designate the chair (or co-chairs) of the Selection Panel. In addition, City staff designated by the Directors of the following departments will serve in a support role for the Selection Panel: Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, Office of Historic Alexandria, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, and the Department of Planning & Zoning. In addition, other ex-officio members to be invited include representatives from the Park & Recreation Commission, Old Town Civic Association, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Neighborhood Task Force.

The semi-finalist proposals/models will be exhibited for a two-to-four week public review period. Based on public comment and Panel review, the Panel will select one of the proposals to recommend to the Alexandria Commission for the Arts. The Commission will review the proposals and Panel recommendation and forward their own recommendation to City Council.

Staff anticipates that the semi-finalists will be selected by winter of 2010. It is anticipated that the final proposal will be recommended to City Council by fall of 2010. The artwork will be completed and ready for installation by the date that the design of the cemetery will be completed, which is anticipated to be late 2011.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The anticipated \$326,000 cost for the public art piece is included in the construction budget for the Freedmen’s Cemetery Memorial. These funds will be reimbursed by the Federal Highway Administration and the Virginia Department of Transportation in accordance with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Settlement Agreement. The cost will include the design, design competition, fabrication, materials, insurance, delivery and installation, travel, and any other incidental costs.

**ATTACHMENT:** Public Art Project Proposed Time Line

**STAFF:**

Richard J. Baier, P.E., Interim Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Emily A. Baker, P.E., Interim Director, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services

Alisa Carrel, Director, Office of the Arts/RPCA

Cheryl Anne Colton, Cultural Arts Administrator, Office of the Arts/RPCA

Pam Cressey, City Archaeologist, Office of Historic Alexandria

**Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial - Public Art Project Proposed Time Line**  
*Draft as of 05/22/09*

- 2009 June  
 - Obtain City Council Approval for Selection Panel Representation  
 - Selection Panel Appointed
- August  
 - Draft RFQ – *Selection Panel with Arts Staff, Planning, Purchasing*
- September  
 - Approve RFQ & Web Site – *Selection Panel*  
 - Submit RFQ to Procurement – *Arts Staff*
- November  
 - Announce and Publicize RFQ – *Arts Staff, Public Art Committee*
- December  
 - Draft Prospectus – *Selection panel with Arts Staff, Planning, Purchasing*
- January  
 - Deadline for Qualifications Submission - *Artists*  
 - Approve Prospectus – *Selection Panel*
- 2010 February  
 - Review and Select Three Finalists – *Selection Panel*  
 - Present Awards/Distribute Prospectus to Finalists – *Arts Staff*
- March  
 - Begin to Draft Contract with Artist – *Arts Staff with City Attorney's Office Staff*
- May  
 - Proposals Due/Present Concepts to Selection Panel – *Artists*  
 - Public Exhibit & Review of Proposals – *Selection Panel, Public*
- July  
 - Final Selection Made and Public Art Committee Notified – *Selection Panel with comments from Public*
- August  
 - Review of Selection/Write Report – *Public Art Committee*  
 - Vote on Recommendation – *Arts Commission*
- September  
 - Receive Report/Docketed Item – *City Council*  
 - Public Hearing and Vote – *City Council*
- October  
 - Announce Finalist  
 - Creation of Artwork – *Artist*
- 2011 Fall  
 - Installation