

Written Testimony - Agenda Item 614

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
614	Steve Holgate	Oppose		Yes	07/14/23 3:00 PM
614	Tony Greiner	Oppose	<p>The well-meaning efforts of the monuments committee do not address the main problem: The pulling down of these monuments was the act of a mob. They were acting lawlessly and damaged public property. City Council needs to take this opportunity to re-establish a basic tenet of democracy: Rule of Law, not Mob Rule.</p> <p>Restore EVERY statue, and then, having asserted that rule of law is primary, then have the discussion about what do do with them. Stand up for rule of law. Oppose mob violence at every opportunity. Let's not be the city that decided Abraham Lincoln wasn't good enough.</p>	No	07/15/23 11:20 AM
614	B Story Swett, Architect	Oppose	<p>The importance of our public art and monuments to our city cannot be underestimated. These enduring structures, by their importance in the public realm, directly contribute to the perception of our city, communicating its values to a broad audience of interests and perspectives. Additions, changes and initiatives with such importance under the city authority should only be undertaken after a thorough civic-wide dialogue about impacts. The ordinance, as written, dramatically short-changes that dialogue, depriving the city's broader arts and cultural interests an opportunity to contribute their important expertise without bias or undue influence from special interests. The proposed process involving the Regional Arts and Culture Council, will unduly limit the forum and public input important to a full civic dialogue. Public art deserves the broadest of public dialogues. Fortunately for the city and its citizen, a ready solution is now available and should be introduced into Council Ordinance to help advise and inform their decision-making. It is funded by the Mellon Foundation and organized around a series of community-wide engagements. I oppose Ord 614 as written while urging the adoption of a transparent, more robust, public and inclusive dialogue within the city's process to improve our public spaces, expressions and city's appearance.</p>	No	07/17/23 8:10 AM
614	Roberta Cation	Oppose	<p>Reinstall the statues on their original pedestals, continuing to memorialize history.</p> <p>Commission new fine art statues/sculptures/public art that are expressions of today.</p> <p>Allow us to question the social standards and reflect on our history, our present day and our future.</p>	No	07/17/23 11:13 AM

While I wish to thank the Portland Monuments Engagement Committee for the work and thought that went into its report, I believe it has fatal shortcomings.

Yes, each of the subjects of the monuments in question was a flawed human being. So are we all. Washington and Jefferson owned slaves, something we rightly find abhorrent today and blots their heritage. But we can't let our appreciation of them end there.

At the risk of their lives, they transcended their flaws to lay down revolutionary principles that form our country to this day and have inspired liberation movements around the globe. Jefferson, dared to express the radical and enduring ideas that colonialism is wrong and that all of us are created equal. Because of Washington's refusal to act as a king or dictator – powers that were suggested for him – we can still rein in those who attempts to do so. They deserve much of the credit for why you can hold elective office – even if you must occasionally wonder what you got yourselves into – and why we can hold this open and frank discussion.

While Theodore Roosevelt's faults are very real, he was also our first environmental president, conserving vast tracts of lands and establishing the national park system. He led our first serious efforts to reign in the power of big business, establish workers' rights and protect the health and safety of all Americans. He was the first president to advocate a national health care system. He was also the first American to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

As for Abraham Lincoln, I'm a little shocked that we need to defend his greatness. More than any other single individual, he deserves credit for preserving our Union and ending slavery in America. His statement that ours is a country dedicated to the proposition that we are all created equal was controversial in its time. Yet it launched the second American Revolution that continues to benefit the struggles of all oppressed Americans.

As I read the report, I find no awareness of any of these facts. The characterizations in the report are a parody of who they were. While the report rightly refers to the justifiable pain and anger in many of our communities, it reflects no understanding that these are the figures who helped establish the tools we use to redress them.

In other words, despite the drafters' concern for contextualizing their lives, the report is astonishingly lacking in exactly this quality. One problem may be that, for all the impressive credentials of its drafters, I see no indication that any of them has a deep understanding of the scope or detail of our national history.

An example of this is the repeated criticism of Abraham Lincoln for signing the death warrants of nearly two score Santee Dakota. Let me quote a passage that puts this in a more positive light:

"(A)n Army commission was formed to prosecute the Santee 'conspirators,' who were denied access to legal counsel. Consequently, over three hundred Santee were sentenced to death.

Protest by a handful of concerned missionaries and individuals brought the matter to President Lincoln's attention, who reviewed the cases and commuted all but thirty-nine sentences."

This statement is from the official tribal history of the Santee people. What kind of insensitivity allows us to pretend we know how to interpret their history better than they do?

For this and other reasons, I believe the RACC is the wrong institution to lead any effort to make decisions on the restoration of these monuments. This is a task that is more historical than artistic, and might be better taken on by the Oregon Historical Society or other more appropriate institution.

I would strongly recommend that the Commission delay a decision on the Committee's report until its membership is broadened to encourage a greater understanding of our history and its report can reflect a better-informed viewpoint.

To close, there was in fact little controversy over these statues until the rioters who smashed the windows of the Oregon Historical Society and many other downtown buildings also knocked over these monuments. We cannot allow these vandals to set, in this way, the agenda of our city.

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
614	Linda M. Wysong, Kenton Resident, Portland, OR	Support	<p>Dear Council Members,</p> <p>I am writing in support of the recommendations by Portland's Monument Engagement Process Committee. History and public monuments matter. We must always remember that monuments reflect the moment and cultural assumptions of the period when they were erected. It is important to preserve them as artifacts and to place them within their historical context.</p> <p>I have had the opportunity to connect with Portlanders and public art in a somewhat unusual way. In the 1990's I worked for 4 years as a contractor for the Regional Art & Culture Council (RACC) cleaning and repairing public sculpture in Portland. The sculptures I cleaned and polished included: Abraham Lincoln, Thompson Elk Fountain, Theodore Roosevelt, Rough Rider, and the Beverly Cleary sculptures. I soon learned that the residents of Portland care about their public art and that they are anxious to discuss the history and implications of each piece. People frequently stopped by while I was working to engage in conversation. Portlanders are a curious group and their comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * This statue makes me feel this way – how do you feel when you see it? * What is the history behind this sculpture? * I love the story behind this work. * When I walk by this on my way to work, I wonder about ... * Who created this sculpture and what was happening at that time? * Why doesn't the city have a statue of ...? <p>Long before the recent demonstrations and toppling of monuments, Portlanders have been interested in conversations around our Public Monuments. Now the need for these conversations is even more important. We deserve a meaningful public discussion around the city's Monuments and Memorials.</p> <p>These discussions take time, and we deserve the opportunity to engage and to work toward inclusive and equitable outcomes. These concerns about public memory and justice should not be decided quickly by individual City Council members or staff but need a community conversation with time and outreach.</p> <p>Portland's Monument Engagement Process is just such an approach, please support it.</p> <p>Sincerely, Linda Wysong (she/her)</p>	Yes	07/17/23 6:30 PM
614	Joanne A Fleck	Oppose	<p>I don't believe you should hand off decisions on an issue of such importance to the residents of Portland to some outside entity such as RACC. I believe you should instead move forward by appointing a committee of two trusted liberal historians and two trusted conservative historians, to write life summaries for each of the subjects of the monuments in about 1,000 words. (The committee could divide up the assignments to be the one to write the original draft. They should focus on the subject's positive attributes and contributions to our country and also acknowledge things for which the subject has been criticized, fairly representing the circumstances of the time. If we only had statues of perfect individuals, we would have no statues. When the original draft is completed, the committee members could negotiate with each other on the wording of the final draft.) These life summaries could be posted by the bases of the statues. With unbiased life summaries, there should no longer be any excuse for vandalism. Vandalization should be a punishable offense.</p>	No	07/18/23 11:40 AM
614	Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union	Oppose	See attached PDF file	Yes	07/18/23 4:45 PM



WILLAMETTE
UNIVERSITY

Pacific Northwest
College of Art

July 19, 2023

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in support of the recommendations by *Portland's Monument Engagement Process Committee*. History and public monuments matter. We must always remember that monuments reflect the moment and cultural assumptions of the period when they were erected. It is important to preserve them as artifacts and to place them within their historical context.

I have had the opportunity to connect with Portlanders and public art in a somewhat unusual way. In the 1990's I worked for 4 years as a contractor for the Regional Art & Culture Council (RACC) cleaning and repairing public sculpture in Portland. The sculptures I cleaned and polished included: ***Abraham Lincoln, Thompson Elk Fountain, Theodore Roosevelt, Rough Rider, and the Beverly Cleary*** sculptures. I soon learned that the residents of Portland care about their public art and that they are anxious to discuss the history and implications of each piece. People frequently stopped by while I was working to engage in conversation. Portlanders are a curious group and their comments included:

- * This statue makes me feel this way – how do you feel when you see it?
- * What is the history behind this sculpture?
- * I love the story behind this work.
- * When I walk by this on my way to work, I wonder about ...
- * Who created this sculpture and what was happening at that time?
- * Why doesn't the city have a statue of ...?

Long before the recent demonstrations and toppling of monuments, Portlanders have been interested in conversations around our Public Monuments. Now the need for these conversations is even more important. We deserve a meaningful public discussion around the city's Monuments and Memorials.

These discussions take time, and we deserve the opportunity to engage and to work toward inclusive and equitable outcomes. These concerns about public memory and justice should not be decided quickly by individual City Council members or staff but need a community conversation with time and outreach.

Portland's Monument Engagement Process is just such an approach, please support it.

Sincerely,
Linda Wysong

Linda M. Wysong, Associate Professor (she/her)
Liberal Arts & Intermedia Departments

We recognize that we live and work on the traditional lands of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, bands of the Chinook, and many other Indigenous Nations who made their homes along the Willamette and Columbia Rivers.

July 19, 2023

Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioners Gonzalez, Mapps, Rubio, Ryan
City Hall
1221 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners,

We represent George Washington's Mount Vernon and the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, the oldest historic preservation organization in the country, founded in 1853. Our mission is to preserve George Washington's home and to educate Americans about the life, legacy and leadership of our first President. We are proud to have helped 120 Oregon teachers over the last 20 years by providing professional training to support history and social studies at no cost to them.

We are deeply disturbed by the desecration of the statue of George Washington in the city of Portland and offer context to the conversation about memorials. ***As experts on George Washington, we would like to be part of the conversation when making decisions about the disposition of the George Washington Statue in a city warehouse.***

We do not memorialize George Washington because he was a slave owner or because, in his last will and testament, he freed his slaves. We honor his legacy because he was *indispensable* to the founding of the United States of America.

George Washington led the army that secured the independence of the United States, an act of perseverance, courage, and vision that helped create a republic that celebrated the idea of representative government, and established a new nation based upon the notion of individual rights and the rule of law.

The doctrine of liberty endorsed by the revolution would transform the old world. The concepts of equality and popular sovereignty enshrined in the Declaration of Independence would help usher in the modern ideas that we take for granted. This new American creed would be used by the newly created states to expand the idea of democracy, and in the North to liberate thousands of men and women held in bondage.

For the first time in hundreds of years, a nation on a grand scale had put the people in charge, and thanks to George Washington's leadership, the people would be in control of their own destiny, not under the arbitrary rule of a monarch or dictator. Without George Washington, we would not have our cherished tradition of civilian control of the military. Unlike most countries, we have never had a military coup, and we do not have our military playing an oversized role in our politics thanks to the example of George Washington.

George Washington led the movement to create the United States Constitution so that the hard-won independence would not collapse into anarchy and confusion as so many independent

republics have experienced. The example of a peaceful effort to create a new government, with a written Constitution with a declaration of rights has become a model for the spread of constitutional democracies the world over. This is what we inherited from the leadership of George Washington.

Under our Constitution, George Washington established the unique office of the President and established the precedents of that office as well as the example of an orderly transfer of power in what he described as our “great experiment” in democracy. Without George Washington, there would be no United States of America; there would be no Constitution, which allows the freedom of speech, assembly, and protest, protects individuals from unreasonable search and seizure and assures the separation of church from state.

If we fail to honor George Washington, because we understand him only as a slave owner, we will lose the story of the birth of the United States, for it will have no beginning and very little direction. Our history is a powerful one, and we can find flaws in many of our past heroes. But the American system possesses an extraordinary ability to renew itself based on the aspirational ideals enshrined in our founding documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution with its amenable Bill of Rights—which can assure the growth of liberty over the years. None of these documents would exist without George Washington. But perhaps more importantly, without these documents, and our institutions of government, we would not live in a society where we have the guaranteed freedoms and protections to speak up, demand action, and make our society reflect the values of today. And that is why we honor George Washington.

Statues and monuments are not permanent, but the guiding principles of our nation must be. While other revolutions have ended in anarchy or dictatorship, ours has been constantly demanding that each generation live up to its aspirational ideals—to form a more perfect Union. We encourage Americans to read and argue about their history, to teach civics to our rising generation, to understand the sacrifices and the compromises that earlier generations made, and to read about the life and times of George Washington to understand our limits, but also our potential for greatness.

Please advise us on the plans for the statue of George Washington. We welcome the opportunity to share our educational resources relating to George Washington, including the history of slavery at Mount Vernon, which are publicly accessible at <http://mountvernon.org/slavery>.

Sincerely,
Mary Lang Bishop
Vice Regent for Oregon
Mount Vernon Ladies Association

Anne Crumpacker
Vice Regent Emerita for Oregon
Mount Vernon Ladies Association

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
614	Christian Orellana Bauer	Support	<p>The events 2020 and the subsequent years since have offered poignant illustrations of how cultural paradigm shifts (heightened by large scale historical events such as the pandemic and ongoing climate collapse) reverberate from the national level down to our individual communities, families, and friends.</p> <p>These shifts are not something which can be reigned in, they are arguably part of the naturally occurring process of how culture, politics, and social structures evolve over time in response to various factors such as socioeconomic inequality, political struggles between nations/states, environmental changes etc.</p> <p>The issue in question of the toppled monuments is a junction point within this larger context of cultural transformation. It would be an inaccurate response to move forward by simply reverting to the "way things were before" and returning the statues to their original locations. A moment such as this one requires deeper reflection and community conversation which can happen through initiatives such as the ones suggested in items 614 and 615.</p> <p>Please support these items, the changes and conversations that began with the events of 2020 will not stop simply because we try to return to 2019. We must allow ourselves as a city, state, and nation to continue discussing them encouraging critical thinking from a nuanced perspective rather than repressing them or we risk falling into a constant battle between the fiction of what was and the reality of what is.</p> <p>To paraphrase George Santayana "Those who cannot learn from their history are doomed to repeat it"</p> <p>Thank you for your time and attention on this matter</p>	No	07/18/23 5:55 PM
614	Chris Freeman	Support	<p>Please be open to progressive voices from the public for how to address the monuments that were brought down during 2020. They were taken down out of a passion to change the story that we tell about ourselves - to decenter the white majority, the winners of history who have unfairly gotten to control this narrative for hundreds of years. This is in line with Portland's counter-cultural spirit that drew so many artists and creatives and weirdos here over the last 30-40 years. These are the people who have shaped the city and made it what it is. They need to have a say in how to replace the monuments. There are probably loud conservative voices who just want to go back to how things were, but that is not the spirit of those nightly 2020 protests and it's not the spirit of Portland. When dealing with the monuments - think change, think the future, think reshaping history, think equity, think progressive west coast values! Also - if you put the Elk back where it was, PLEASE turn it around so it faces traffic. It's on an entrance boulevard into downtown, drivers should see its face not its butt when they enter our beautiful city.</p>	No	07/18/23 8:24 PM
614	Anonymous	Oppose	<p>Portland must take a hard look at the role of monuments and memorials in the public space The Regional Arts and Culture Council is not the body to be establishing and implementing policy in this area.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) RACC is a private, not-for-profit organization operating under contract with the City. Policy should be established by the City and not delegated to outsider organizations. 2) RACC's expertise is art. Their board and staff should not be defining what is 'politically correct' for Portland. 3) The statues were toppled by the illegal acts of rioters, and RACC has sanctioned their actions by unilaterally deciding the statues will not be replaced to their public locations. The RACC report preemptively condones such destruction in the future. <p>Monuments and memorials go beyond works of art, from the Memorial Coliseum to the Viet Nam Memorial to street names to plaques on park benches. These go far beyond RACC's charge to manage public art.</p>	No	07/18/23 9:12 PM

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
614	Terry Parker	Support with changes	<p>To Members of the Portland City Council,</p> <p>Let me start by comparing Portland's incarcerated historical statues to the Fourth of July, the holiday for which the signing of the Declaration of Independence is celebrated. There were 53 signers of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th 1776. Ten of those signers were plantation owners who likely had slaves to work the fields. Two were land speculators likely involving the taking of Native American lands and one was a surveyor likely assisting the land speculators.</p> <p>So do we tear up the Declaration of Independence and cancel the holiday because some of the signers were not perfect? Along with the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights that followed, all were starting points and building blocks for a society that believes in the freedom of the people. Independence day is about displaying the American Flag in support of those who came before us; the leaders, the outmatched militias who fought for our independence and those who simply risked everything - time and again - to build a new life and be free. The Fourth of July is not a day just for the mayhem of shooting off illegal fireworks and getting away with it because there is no enforcement.</p> <p>With the array of today's methods of voice, visual and other electronic communications, it is difficult to truly visualize and fully relate to what the times were like and how the decisions were made when George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt were in their terms as President of the United States. We can only read about their trials and tribulations as documented and edited. All four of these former Presidents bear some responsibility for the decisions made while in office, but instead of having what today is perceived as their faults radiating out like blinding headlights for groups or sectors of the population that want to divide us with a new intensity, although not perfect, these past Presidents should be praised and honored for the courage and progression they made forward towards an overall free and equal opportunity for all of the inhabitants of this country.</p> <p>We must not forget that art (like it or not), culture, imagination, and innovation all give civilizations enduring strength. Not returning Portland's decades old beloved by many historic public art statues to a public place where they can be viewed and appreciated by the public undermines American history. This type of censorship is a weapon of oppressors. Free speech is the hallmark of liberty. While there must be a rigorous, open public process that includes neighborhood association representation and participation for the sighting of where these statues will be placed, the decision of returning them to a place where they can viewed should already be a given. If the statues are not returned to such a place, then ALL statues of historical figures need to be removed, including that of Martin Luther King Jr. for which the FBI has suspiciously sealed all files pertaining to and possibly concealing any illegal activities he may have been involved with. That way neither those for or against placing these statues back in public view can claim discrimination.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted,</p> <p>Terry Parker Northeast Portland</p>	No	07/18/23 9:42 PM

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
614	Anna Gray + Ryan Wilson Paulsen	Support	<p>As longtime Portland residents, artists, and educators, we support the recommendations from the Monuments and Memorials Engagement Process Committee. For years, we lived downtown and a number of the absent monuments were very present parts of our daily lives. Despite their anchorage in the park blocks, we've been heartened to see the attention given to reconsidering the worship of the narratives they represent. Walking by their empty plinths was a generative and powerful experience and a welcome change.</p> <p>The statues and artworks that are erected in our public space should reflect a diverse history and we should have opportunities for re-evaluating and re-activating them in our ever-changing social landscape. The progressive and insightful report prepared by the committee includes a variety of creative strategies for ongoing dialogue about public memorials and monuments that aren't dry or bureaucratic, but rather researched and proposed with real people and communities in mind.</p> <p>The people of this city should have a say in what stories get told, retold, and memorialized. To simply return toppled and removed monuments to their pedestals without a robust and accessible dialogue is a way of ignoring and silencing important voices in our community.</p> <p>We want to live in a city with public art, monuments, and memorials that are kept alive by conversation and civic participation.</p>	Yes	07/18/23 10:03 PM
614	George Washington's Mount Vernon	Oppose		Yes	07/19/23 5:37 AM
614	Anonymous	Oppose	In a city with problems far beyond the scope of statues, this exercise is a waste of time and talent that could be spent more judiciously on public safety which should be the priority. The statues of the leaders who stood for the freedoms we enjoy today, should be put back where they stood, immediately. You can't end racism by promoting it. The idea that a committee has to be "60% BIPOC" is racist in the extreme as the Constitution requires a color blind society.	No	07/19/23 10:29 AM
614	George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon	Oppose		Yes	07/19/23 11:40 AM
614	Malia Jensen	Support	Accept Public Engagement Report from Monuments and Memorials Committee. And, accept and appropriate grant from Mellon Foundation.	Yes	07/19/23 12:41 PM



Excerpt from *100 Posterworks*
Anna Gray + Ryan Wilson Paulsen
11 x 17 in.
2009

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S
MOUNT ★ VERNON

July 18, 2023

Honorable Mayor Wheeler:

It has been suggested to me that I might be of some help in providing perspective on questions that relate to our country's first president. If this is the case, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

Given my association with Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, I can assure you that our intention at Mount Vernon is to present history transparently with all of its positive and negative realities. Our mission is to educate, and our first president provides an unparalleled opportunity as an illustration of the depth of our origins and their complexity. Washington's contribution was to help set in motion, as chair of the Constitutional Convention and as the first President, a new and better course for all of humankind where the citizens would have control over their fate through a representative collective voice, not a divine ruler. It's a right that all Americans cherish today and makes Washington worthy of remembrance.

I am concerned that condemnation and removal of reminders of our history is the wrong approach to take. I would like to offer the idea that adding to the resources that give people insight into our history and elicit contemporary thoughts about former times, rather than subtracting from them, is the most constructive course to take.

I support the idea, which has been forwarded to me by some residents of Portland, that history should be about explaining, not judging. We should build a future for our nation's children that doesn't hide the past from them but instead puts it in context and adequately educates them on the positive and negative aspects of our history.

This is a task we take on daily at the George Washington Presidential Library and through our Teacher Institute. I am happy to make myself available if you feel it may help create a better understanding of our country's first president.

I thank you for your time and consideration and stand by in service to the residents and leadership of Portland.

Best wishes,

Douglas Bradburn, Ph.D.
President and CEO
George Washington's Mount Vernon

THE MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 110, Mount Vernon, VA 22121

703.780.2000 | mountvernon.org





THE
GEORGE WASHINGTON
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY
AT MOUNT VERNON

July 19, 2023

Mayor Ted Wheeler
City Hall
1221 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

Dear Mayor Wheeler,

I am the Executive Director of the George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon. I'm writing today in response to the city's current consideration of what to do with the George Washington statue that was commissioned in 1926, sculpted by Pompeo Coppini, and previously on display outside the German American Society. I write from the perspective of a historian who has published on the American Revolution, held senior leadership positions at cultural institutions, and been engaged in a wide range of public history projects for almost two decades.

The city of Portland, much like our country as a whole, deserves a robust, vibrant, and diverse public square full of debate and ideas and one that also represents its history as fully as possible. In fact, one of the signs of a healthy democracy is for its society to embrace its past, to celebrate it when appropriate, and to learn lessons from accomplishments as well as from errors and failures. In short, I believe that a healthy public square should be expansive and inclusive, not restrictive and selective.

I fear that removing these statues from Portland's public spaces will limit the ability of those in Portland and beyond to have fulsome and honest discussions of the past. We should not ignore, misrepresent, silence, or forget the past, especially the role of such consequential figures like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, but I fear that will be the outcome – perhaps unintended – of removing these statues from the public square and the conversations they engender. There are lessons we can all learn by including them.



THE MOUNT VERNON
LADIES' ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 3600 • Mount Vernon, Virginia 22121 • 703.780.3600 • mountvernon.org/library



THE
GEORGE WASHINGTON
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY
AT MOUNT VERNON

Rather than subtract from its public spaces, I would encourage Portland to consider allocating its time and resources to adding to this square, much as Philadelphians did with the addition of a statue of African American freedom fighter Octavius Catto outside of their City Hall in 2017. He joined a panoply of other statues that were all built at the time of City Hall's opening and showcased nineteenth-century city civic and business leaders, all of whom were white men. Catto's statue was the first new statue added to the grounds, and a group of Philadelphians spurred the initiative because they wanted their public square to more fully represent the history of the city. Just imagine how much more dynamic Portland's public spaces could be if the city kept its current statues and built new ones to reflect Portland's rich history more completely.

I am happy to speak more with anyone involved in the current projects that are confronting the legacy of the Washington statue or other statues.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick Spero
Executive Director
The George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon Ladies' Association
pspero@mountvernon.org



THE MOUNT VERNON
LADIES' ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 3600 • Mount Vernon, Virginia 22121 • 703.780.3600 • mountvernon.org/library

Dear City Council,

The monuments report outlines a tremendous opportunity for transformative work and meaningful engagement around public monuments. The “fallen five”, as they have been referred to, are only part of the picture. History is indeed important and how we as a community respond to this present reckoning will create our future history, either bringing communities together or allowing continued division and ongoing conflict.

Could we create a monument to resilience? To change? To planet earth? Could a staged conversation between Abraham Lincoln and Harriet Tubman become a living monument to civic conversation? Monuments have a freighted history but broad potential. As an artist interested in complex and often unanswerable questions, these daunting issues are also inspiring.

Portland has an opportunity to strengthen our own community and also forge a path for cities across the country. It would be a shame if we were not courageous enough to embrace the recommendations of this well researched and insightful report.

Respectfully,
Malia Jensen

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
614	Stephanie Snyder, director, Reed College Art Museum—The Cooley Gallery		<p>I am writing today, to strongly urge the committee that is reviewing the repair and replacement of public monuments, to pause and do a more thorough investigation of the most civic-minded and equitable way to address the complex issues involved in these decisions.</p> <p>With over twenty years in the museum field, I feel confident in saying that any extra research and dialogue you conduct now, will only benefit the city's public art, and especially the city's future position on monuments past, present, and future.</p> <p>The very notion of monumentality is one tied to the realities of power, and financial control. Even the most righteous monuments from the past were erected by those who may have had other agendas, or streams of influence.</p> <p>These histories do not have to condemn the monuments of the past, but they should be addressed transparently. The stories of their birth are as important as the figures and moments they represent.</p> <p>Please, take the time to do your due diligence as our trusted civic leaders. I am here to help as called upon.</p> <p>Yours, in art, and as a native daughter of this wonderful city,</p> <p>Stephanie Sakellaris Snyder</p>	No	07/19/23 12:52 PM
614	Jim Baucom	Support with changes	<p>Please bring back the Elk statue in the park blocks. It was destroyed by Antifa, but we could use the Arts tax to re-install it at its previous location. The elk was an odd 100 year old statue that is of historical significance. Thank you.</p>	No	07/19/23 1:14 PM
614	rod merrick	Support with changes		Yes	07/19/23 4:04 PM

July 15, 2023

Subject: Concerned Citizens Review of Portland Monuments Engagement Process (PMEP)

To: Commissioner Dan Ryan

C: Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Rubio, Commissioner Gonzalez, Commissioner Mapps

Dear Commissioner Ryan,

Thanks for the opportunity to review the subject PMEP Report sponsored by RACC. We are a group of Portlanders comprised of architects, educators, economists, historians, lawyers, neighborhood leaders and former elected officials who call ourselves the Concerned Citizens. We appreciate Council decisions to implement restoration of the Thompson Elk Fountain. Bravo! After a deep dive by our group, we thought it politic to alert you to our observations.

Executive Summary:

1. The Report deviates in significant ways from the scope of their brief as described on the RACC website in contracting for the report. Aside from numerous errors of fact, it reads not as a process to engage and assess but as a manifesto to permanently remove the memorials.
2. The Report asks Council to empower RACC, a private corporation that lacks oversight, has an unstable track record, and in this instance has facilitated a predetermined outcome for the removal of the monuments to be arbiter and decider about these and future public monuments by contracting with “panels” under the direction of RACC.
3. The Report presumes motives for vandalism of monuments, provides rationalizations for damaging and defacing public property and destroying monuments, and implies justification to repeat in the event that the statues are restored and replaced.
4. The Report proposes an engagement processes to determine the future of the memorials that primarily seeks to involve opinions of those who feel aggrieved by a particular interpretation of history rather than from a broad array of experts and the general public. Broad public input and data is critical to the credibility of the outcomes.
5. The proposed engagement process lacks criteria for documentation of substantial facts and finding, a budget, qualifications of individuals who should lead the process, criteria for decision making, and concise timelines. All this to be determined by RACC or panels established by RACC.
6. The experience of a half dozen cities is mentioned in the Report (mostly dealing with Confederate Civil War heroes of the south) with no coherent assessment provided. We point to

essential components of NYC’s Mayoral Advisory Commission approach that accomplished its purpose in three months and offers a framework that proved both inclusive and expeditious.

7. Last but not least, news of The Mellon Grant provides City Council with funds to establish an equitable, inclusive, and informed Commission. Like NYC’s model, Portland’s approach should be based on “a *nuanced understanding of the complicated histories we have inherited*” and “rooted in the Commission’s shared values and respect for multiple viewpoints” (NYC Mayoral Advisory Commission report 2018:1, 4).

Summary of Findings.

It is our impression that the purpose of the Portland Monuments Engagement Process Committee (PMEPC) report was to *assess best practices and to frame the process for engaging the public and assessing the disposition of public monuments in Portland*; specifically those damaged and subsequently removed some three years ago. Our fundamental concern is that the document provides unexpected authority to RACC and fails, in multiple ways, to meet the intended purpose.

These are our preliminary findings and recommendations:

- The report cites six example cities that have some type of monument assessment process without documenting or evaluating how those examples might be useful for Portland. Several of these are primarily concerned with Confederate monuments celebrating Civil War heroes of the rebel south which presents challenges unlike the discussion of monuments in Portland.
- Council is being asked to endorse an expansion of RACC’s authority (and budget) over an aspirational but deeply flawed process in which RACC will manage the appointment of committee or panel members, the agenda, communications, and public engagement (including who gets to be heard). The power to determine the panel composition and the rules under which they operate are a very significant change from what is currently accorded RACC under its contract. It is also problematic. RACC has had a controversial history, a 2018 audit, and will be under another audit in the coming year.
- Council is being asked to provide authority to determine, through RACC-appointed selected panels, each individual monument including the fate of “fallen” statues – and specifically those that have been removed for more than 2 years. As recommended, those panels will apply RACC’s criteria. Further, there’s no defined timeline, no budget, and no discussion of how data will be employed or reported. The Report states that panels might recommend their own “community engagement activities and artistic programming “and will recommend a timeline.”
- As part of expanded RACC authority, Council is being asked to endorse new "Monument Review Guidelines," which include new "Criteria for Review" (page 33). These "criteria" make it easier to remove monuments, based on the assumption that monuments may be

judged to contradict contemporary "values," as determined by RACC or its appointed "Monument Review Panel [that] will be formed and appointed by the RACC.

- The Report places RACC at the center of determining which "cultural groups" and "impacted groups" will be "motivated" to participate. The report makes clear that RACC is not interested in the opinions of experts and those who regularly participate in civic discourse.
- Council is being asked to approve three vague and politically loaded "guidelines" without public process. These guidelines include a principle that assures a lengthy and expensive process as long as it takes.

For example, there's no defined timeline or discussion of whether the individual panels will run concurrently, or sequentially. Instead, the report states that review panels might recommend their own further "community engagement activities and artistic programming" and "will recommend a timeline."

- Council is being asked to support a wide range of costly if creative initiatives including walking tours, lectures, symposia, the installation of pedestals around the city which might serve as the base for future memorials or performing sculptures, and community rallying events. Again authorizing RACC to initiate these events is a commitment to expand funding for RACC activities and empowering RACC to set the agenda.
- Despite the rejection of the vandalism by leaders of the peaceful BLM protests aimed at police violence and social injustice, the vandals smashed windows, applied graffiti, attacked public memorials, and attempted to burn public buildings. All were as much the target of vandalism as the historic figures that have been spun in the Report as emblematic of contemporary inequities.
- The report presents the position that the street violence, smashed businesses, and vandalism of Portland's "fallen monuments" is justified and represents important social conflicts that requires resolution in the form of replacement memorials.
 - On page 42-43 the report equates the BLM protests with the vandalism that was specifically rejected by organizers and claimed rather by espousers of the ill-defined Antifa. For each of the memorials under consideration, a paragraph portraying instances of wrongdoing that justifies removal is included.
 - Paraphrasing Advising Reader Paul Susi on page 58, restoring these monuments would be repeating the past mistake of those misguided people who commissioned the memorials in the first place.
 - Or Sidney Morgan: "*The city can choose to stitch a new garment that fits us all instead of the status quo that, in the end, does not work for even the most privileged and advantaged*".
 - Or the Concluding sentence of the Conclusion page 54, "*By treating Portland's monuments not as sacred idols of the past but as starting points for meaningful dialogues about our present, Portland will be on the right side of history.*"

In these comments and throughout the report, vandalism that destroyed monuments (government buildings and businesses) is sanctified. In this sense the report aims to expunge the history that the memorials represent. It leaves no room for restoration and obviates the need for further study or “conflict resolution” except for how to repurpose the pedestals for future artwork.

- The report is emblematic of the challenges of encouraging broad engagement in history and the related arts. RACC’s decision to have the engagement process defined by a narrow elite including RACC staff and four academics with a common interpretation of history is inherently exclusive. By defining “inclusive” in terms of oppressed or under represented classes rather than all Portlanders is characteristic of the conflicts likely to be provoked rather than resolved.
- In framing the historic consideration of two statues (Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Rider and Abraham Lincoln) and the repurposing of their pedestal bases in the South Park Blocks Historic District, the Report (p 45) incorrectly claims that in order for resources such as statuary and plinths to be included as “contributing” objects, they need to be directly associated with property’s significance. *In fact, both monuments would have been considered “contributing” due to their direct association with the district.* The statues could not be included in the nomination because, at the time, they had been removed. Concurrently, RACC publicly stated that they would not be returned to their bases. By contrast, the National Park Service is on record that if the statues were put back, they could be considered contributing.
- The report is contradictory on the subject of memorials. One of the proposed “guidelines” says that “history is important”. In another paragraph an individual is quoted as saying that memorials are invisible, “like a drop of water on an oilskin, attention runs down them without stopping for a moment” (p.4). Thereafter, the Report claims that memorials are a powerful and constant reminder of what society values and (if they represent values contrary to contemporary values) they should be replaced as times change.

Some public art may represent current values or future aspirations. By definition and purpose, however, a memorial is to celebrate or memorialize a quality, accomplishment, place or event for the benefit of historical memory. Interpretation of the values celebrated in a memorial will likely evolve but before determining what should be removed, the goal should be to respect the values intended to be represented and consider what additive context is needed.

A WAY FORWARD

We could not agree more when the Report states, “history is important.” Despite its many shortcomings, the intent behind the ask for a report is very much on target. It is time to reassess the contributions of those celebrated including their dark side. Public education about our shared history has faded in importance. The selective telling of history has reinforced our divisions. The Report has the value of raising questions that need answers. We applaud Dan Ryan’s willingness to take the next step, take advantage of the Mellon Grant, and advance a process under the control of City Council.

It is our hope that the next steps will draw from lessons and the example of the New York City’s Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers. That report states up front that it’s committed to “*a process of historical reckoning, a nuanced understanding of the complicated histories we have inherited.*” It advocates for a “*process that moves beyond an all-or-nothing choice between keeping or removing monuments*” and acknowledges that “*sometimes the best option will be to add new works of public art or new educational opportunities.*” (NYC Mayoral Advisory Commission report 2018:2).

Thanks for your time in reviewing our assessment of the PMEPC Report.

With Respect and Regards,

Portland Concerned Citizens

Portland City Council Meeting - Wednesday, July 19, 2023 2:00 p.m.

Agenda Item	First Name	Last Name
614-01	Carl	Abbott
614-02	Sarah	Farahat
614-03	Master Artist Michael	Bernard Stevenson Jr.
614-04	Chet	Orloff
614-05	Steve	Holgate
614-06	Garrick	Imatani
614-07	Meagan	Atiyeh
614-08	Eliza	Canty-Jones
614-9	Sophia	Austrins
614-10	Fred	Leeson