



To: Portland Historic Landmarks Commission

From: Darion Jones, Senior Policy Director of Arts, Culture, and Equity
Portland City Commissioner Dan Ryan
Commissioner of Culture & Livability

Date: February 20, 2024

Re: Portland Monuments Project Landmarks Commission Briefing on February 26, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a briefing on the **Portland Monuments Project**. This memo serves as an overview and introduction to the items we will be discussing on Monday, February 26, 2024.

The City of Portland, like many cities across the US, participated in a national conversation in 2020 focused on the reevaluation of historical monuments and a clarion call from the public for greater introspection about who and what is memorialized in public space. Of the 170 outdoor sculptures in Multnomah County, four statues were toppled and one statue was damaged during protests. As a result, the City placed the following five monuments in storage:

- Theodore Roosevelt, Rough Rider; 1922; granite, bronze
- George Washington; 1926; granite, bronze
- Abraham Lincoln; 1927; granite, bronze
- Harvey W. Scott; 1933; bronze on a basalt pedestal
- Promised Land; 1993; bronze on granite plinth

A guerilla art intervention in early 2021 saw a bust of York temporarily occupy the Harvey W. Scott pedestal in the Mount Tabor Reservoirs Historic District. The bust was made of materials meant to be temporary, including wood, urethane, and bronze paint, and the sculpture was destroyed by vandalism the same year.

In 2022, Commissioner Rubio, as the Commissioner-in-Charge of Arts & Culture at the time, initiated a partnership with Lewis & Clark College to consider community engagement around the future of monuments in Portland. In January 2023, the City Arts Program commissioned Lewis & Clark to convene the Portland's Monument Engagement Process Committee (PMEPC), which in turn produced *Public Engagement with Portland's Monuments and Memorials: A Report with Recommendations for the City*. The PMEPC's recommendations for public engagement included the creation of walking tours and scavenger hunts, art programming with a focus on augmented reality monuments, public talks and conversations, and the creation of an

archive. They also recommended the City adopt formal monument review guidelines. The report is attached for your review, and you can also find the full report and recommendations online, here: <https://www.portland.gov/omf/arts-program/documents/public-engagement-portlands-monuments-and-memorials-report/download>.

At the same time in early 2023, the City Arts Program applied to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for funding to support the Portland Monuments Project. The City Arts Program was awarded a grant of \$350,000 with two end goals – 1) a community engagement process to inform decisions on the “fate of the five” monuments in storage, and 2) the creation of a policy guiding the future of monuments in Portland. Both the PMEPC report and the Mellon Foundation grant were accepted by City Council on July 19, 2023. Since accepting the grant, the City Arts Program has launched the Portland Monuments Project website www.portland.gov/monuments, hosted breakout sessions about monuments at public Arts Talks, and conducted an online survey. Commissioner Ryan’s Office took over as lead for the Portland Monuments Project in December 2023, and is currently working with the Mellon Foundation to clarify project partners, extend the grant timeline, and refine the grant activities which will include partner-led public talks, creative programming, and participation in the Monuments Project Cities Network with other jurisdictions engaged in this work.

Earlier this month, Commissioner Ryan posted a draft of *5.74.090 Public Art and Monuments Review Policy* for public comment and feedback. The policy was informed by draft monument review guidelines produced by the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) in 2021, as well as best practices and policies adopted by New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, and Vancouver, British Columbia. The draft policy was updated on February 19, 2024 to incorporate public comment and feedback. This second draft of the policy is attached for your review. It will be posted online later this week and will be considered by City Council on February 28, 2024.

This spring, the City Arts Program will present a report to City Council with recommendations on the return and/or removal and deaccession of monuments damaged or destroyed in 2020 and 2021. Implementation of the updated Mellon Foundation grant project activities, including community engagement and creative programming, will be informed by and follow the report. We expect that grant activities will wrap up by October 2025. We also anticipate that the Historic Landmarks Commission will have opportunity to continue in this conversation based on the level of review required for altering, relocating, or removing statues in historic districts.

We welcome your questions and feedback and look forward to working with you.

Regards,



Darion Jones