

Written Testimony - Agenda Item 615

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
615	Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union	Support with changes	See the Statement below. The MVLA would like to be part of the process of deciding the disposition of the George Washington statue.	Yes	07/18/23 4:52 PM
615	Deborah Oropallo	Support	<p>Accept the Mellon FOundation Grant: Educational Value:</p> <p>Historical Accuracy: Monuments often focus on glorifying specific individuals or events, which can oversimplify complex historical narratives. By investing in creative projects, we can encourage a more nuanced and accurate depiction of our history. These projects can explore multiple perspectives, address the less celebrated aspects of our past, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of our shared heritage.</p> <p>Creative projects have the potential to be more educational than static monuments. They can incorporate interactive elements, storytelling, and multimedia to engage the audience and facilitate a deeper understanding of our history. This approach encourages critical thinking and fosters a desire to learn, ensuring that the community remains informed and connected to their heritage.</p> <p>Community Engagement: By involving the community in the creation of these projects, we promote a sense of ownership and encourage active participation. The funds can be used to support local artists, historians, and educators, fostering collaboration and creating meaningful connections within the community. This collective effort strengthens social bonds and enriches the overall cultural fabric of Portland.</p> <p>Adaptability and Evolution: Creative projects have the advantage of being adaptable and evolving over time. As our understanding of history expands and societal perspectives change, these projects can be updated and modified accordingly. This ensures that our representation of history remains relevant and reflects the ongoing growth and development of our community.</p>	No	07/18/23 5:07 PM

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
615	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
615	Chris Freeman	Support	<p>Please accept the grant to address the monuments! This is an important part of our urban environment. Our city should physically and visibly reflect our progressive values. We need to listen to progressive voices from the public for how to address the monuments that were brought down during 2020. The monuments 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!</p>	No	07/18/23 8:27 PM
615	Anna Gray + Ryan Wilson Paulsen	Support	<p>Given the events of 2020, it's clear that a serious dialogue needs to happen about the public monuments and memorials in our city. Upholding the values of anti-racism and inclusivity means taking seriously the voices of the public and developing meaningful avenues for people to weigh in on what gets placed and re-placed in our public space. We are behind material support for an engagement process that can make that a reality.</p>	No	07/18/23 10:14 PM

Agenda Item	Name	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
615	Anonymous	Oppose	I oppose the emergency ordinance facilitating acceptance and appropriation of the \$350,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation for the Portland Monuments Project. This discussion is already a far too byzantine sideshow distracting from the humanitarian catastrophes of our city, specifically our lack of affordable and supportive housing programs, our lack of mental health and substance abuse rehabilitation resources, our enduring systemic racism and bigotry, and our community's dysfunctional relationships with and within the Portland Police Bureau and City Hall. Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt all have cities, states, schools, counties, aircraft carriers, military installations and countless other statues to commemorate them. Neither Harvey Scott nor the Promised Land sculpture group merit further commemoration. Melt them down and sell the scrap metal to fund Portland Street Response.	No	07/18/23 10:47 PM
615	George Washington's Mount Vernon	Support with changes	A commission should be convened that consists of historians as well as arts and culture professionals to determine the future of the statues.	Yes	07/19/23 5:39 AM
615	bart fitzgerald- ruach assembly of portland	Support	I wish to share with you my support for the recommendations made in the Portland's Monument Engagement Process Committee Report and to accept the Mellon Funds to do this import work. I hope that you and the City Council can support the findings of this report and dedicate the needed resources and more importantly time to do the deep community engagement work outlined in the report. We need you to accept these funds and to support the ideas in this report and to let a process unfold. We deserve better monuments that represent the diversity of Portland rather than the five works removed in 2020.	No	07/19/23 2:04 PM
615	concerned citizens	Support	4. Rod Merrick Mayor Wheeler and City Councilors, My name is Rod Merrick a member of the Concerned Citizens on the subject of budget and outcome goals. Today, the city has the great good fortune to be able to accept a substantial grant to accomplish the work of an advisory commission for the City Monuments Project. For any project of this nature it is essential to provide the public with a clear understanding of the anticipated costs. This would include the substantial grant from Mellon Foundation focused on public engagement and decision making processes. Continuing the discussion of an approach in support of Commissioner Ryan's plan and lessons learned from the New York Mayoral Commission, their Commission established a clear decision criteria for the recommendations from the Commission to city council. The process used was intended to ensure a multiplicity of input and expertise in evaluation. Proposed action(s) should ensure transparency in process, narrative, and representation documented in the report. The commission should strive to ensure an evaluation system of checks and balances so that recommendations are thoughtful and... consistent across time and City administrations- perhaps analogous an environmental impact statement. Several recommendation options are specified. They include restoration, providing expanded contextual information and, in cases of deeply polarized debate, recommending short-term and/or temporary intervention at the monument site to encourage participatory, public dialogue, and to defer evaluation. The report by the NYC commission 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." Preference for an additive over a subtractive approach is one that we strongly support.	No	07/19/23 4:06 PM

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



Written Testimony

Row 934

Name	Michelle Stevenson
Agenda Item	615
Position	Support
Comments	<p>Dear Portland City Council,</p> <p>I'm a 39 year old mother and seventh-generation Portlander. My great-great-great grandparents came over on the Oregon Trail in 1853 and settled in Portland and later on in Cape Horn. In addition, I work for police accountability due to my own bad experience with a policeman several years ago. While I am white, my family is mixed race. With these unique identifiers, I believe I can give crucial input into policy about Portland monuments.</p> <p>I personally don't feel a whole lot about the monuments in question. They are neither important to me, or personally cause me pain. I do know the monument in Portland that has caused me pain, and that is the picture of Neil Goldschmidt that was kept up in the mayor's office for many years after we all found out he'd raped a school child repeatedly while mayor. I was not personally hurt by Goldschmidt. I'm certain there are those out there who would roll their eyes and tell me to get over my feelings, that it was just respecting history to leave Goldschmidt's portrait up.</p> <p>Despite it being implied by others that my feelings weren't valid, retention of Goldschmidt's portrait still made me feel like I was worth nothing. Keeping his</p>

portrait up said to me, whether it was meant that way or not, that women and young girls just don't matter, that our feelings and opinions don't matter, that we can be raped repeatedly and nobody cares. It took way too long to take Goldschmidt's portrait down and replace it with indigenous art. As a survivor of child sexual abuse and rape it meant something to me when he was taken down, it meant something to me when he was left up. That's just a fact.

As someone that has spoken at city council it's hurtful when police accountability speakers with lived experience of misconduct are given 2 minutes to speak and are cut off early while people speaking so that monuments are unilaterally restored are given 3 minutes to speak and are allowed to speak over by a lot. People are more important than hunks of metal.

To those testifying in opposition to 615: My grandmother inherited a portion of my family's DLC on the Cape Horn from my grandfather. My grandma's life was not an easy life, she paid taxes on that land through the absolute worst of times. My family refused to log the land, they said no to the money and were good stewards of such an amazing natural resource.

In the 80s just as Grandma was about to retire and build herself a tiny log cabin on the land, the government took the land via eminent domain. Some of the land went to a park but part of the land was then sold off to rich people and the government made money forcing my grandma to sell to them at a pittance.

I have noticed Aubrey Russell, the son of Nancy Neighbor Russell, who championed for eminent domain in my grandma's situation, speak very loudly about returning the statues immediately. In Aubrey's

case, he often spoke about additive and subtractive policy from a \$2,000,000 + home that he inherited. Does he even know or care what was done to my grandma because of his mother's actions? My family supports the park, we are glad the land is safe from deforestation and development, but we should have been given that extra land back, no profit should have been made from forcing us to sell. We love that land. It is, and always will be, a part of our family history. To those who disagree: please remember those who are subtracted from your own equations.

I could speak for hours about the history of Portland. I minored in history in college, my mom wrote a very large book on family history. I grew up taking rubbings of gravestones and learning how to properly clean the stones while my mother did research for her book. I implore the city to respect ALL history, including my own history, which they'd really rather stab in the neck and bury in my family's old DLC claim (which is now a park) because it's a super politically inconvenient history. Thank you.

Submitted 07/17/23 5:13 PM

Final Meeting Date 07/19/23

Public Records Acknowledgement

Attachment No
