

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

Washington, D. C.

\* \* \*

The meeting of The Commission of Fine Arts was convened at 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, March 9, 1982, 708 Jackson Place, Northwest, Washington, D. C., J. CARTER BROWN, Chairman, presiding.

In Attendance:

J. CARTER BROWN, Chairman

HAROLD BURSON

SONDRA G. MYERS

ALAN R. NOVAK

EDWARD D. STONE, Jr.

Staff:

Charles H. Atherton, Secretary

Donald B. Myer, Assistant Secretary

Jeffrey R. Carson

Sue Kohler

P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Let's call the meeting to order.

The first order of business is the dates of the next meetings. They come at the regular times, April 13 and May 11.

MR. STONE: I will not be here for the April meeting.

MR. BURSON: I won't either. I am going to be in Japan. Could we make it a week later?

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Well, let's look. With Walter ill, I am not sure we have a quorum. He may be back by then.

Could we make it Tuesday, the 20th?

MR. BURSON: I would prefer the 21st. Is it possible to have it on a Wednesday or Thursday?

CHAIRMAN BROWN: I have to be away Thursday.

MR. BURSON: How about Wednesday, the 21st?

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Is that good for everybody? The Kennedy Center has a Board meeting, but I can skip that.

Is that something you could make?

MR. STONE: Let me check it.

MR. BURSON: Or could we even do it Friday?

CHAIRMAN BROWN: I can't make it Friday.

To move things along, do we have a motion to approve the minutes of February 17?

MR. BURSON: So move.

MS. MYERS: Second.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Approved.

record so that we will know what we are talking about.

"Dear Mr. Chairman:

"The Department recently received the enclosed revised submission from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund outlining an altered design for the Memorial to be constructed in Constitution Gardens. The basic design is unchanged except for the addition of a flagpole and a statue of an American soldier. The precise location of the flagpole and the details regarding the sculpture have not yet been decided. These design refinements have been added in response to intense interest on the part of Members of Congress and other interested parties. The altered design submitted to me represents a compromise which may be expected to facilitate construction and dedication of a memorial to those Americans who served their country in Vietnam.

"Pursuant to the statute which authorized the Memorial, the design is subject to approval by your Commission, as well as the Department. I am not prepared to act on the submission of February 11 without assurances that the design improvements meet with the approval of the Commission. The compromise so carefully worked out will be for naught if the design refinements are disapproved and not constructed as part of the Memorial. Accordingly, I feel obliged

to await a response from your Commission regarding the acceptability of the design and refinements before rendering my decision. Moreover, I am compelled to consult with Members of Congress before finalizing our decision.

"Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to an early response."

We have written a holding letter to the Secretary saying that we would have an opportunity to discuss this at the next stated meeting of the Commission, which is this morning.

Is there anyone from the Vietnam Memorial Fund who would like to speak to this?

MR. DUDEK: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, good morning.

My name is Robert Dudek. I am the project director of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. As you may recall, we originally appeared before you last June when you approved the site location and concept of the memorial. We appeared in October to present selections of stone, and in November when you approved the design as developed. It is a pleasure to be here again, and I wish to thank you for placing this matter on your agenda today, and we likewise wish to extend our appreciation to Secretary Watt for requesting your early action.

As you may know, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is a non-profit fund managed and directed by Vietnam veterans.

We obtained the concept for the memorial through a method of design competition, which was the largest ever held in the United States. We continue to be enthusiastic about the winning design and are gratified it received your swift approval, as well as the National Capital Planning Commission and National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee.

We are also gratified that numerous other veterans organizations and hundreds of thousands of individual Americans have contributed to the Fund to realize the design.

From the start it has been our hope that this Memorial, in addition to being a long overdue tribute to those who served in our country's longest war, would become a symbol of reconciliation as well. The early enthusiastic acceptance of the design by a broad spectrum of Americans led us to believe our wish was on its way to realization. We, therefore, have been saddened by the fact that the design has sparked a limited, but significant, controversy among our brother Vietnam veterans. The basic criticism has centered not so much on what the design is, but on the fact it lacks elements specifically symbolic of the honorable service of the veterans and their devotion to country.

In the last two months it became apparent to us these concerns needed to be addressed. Thusly, we requested Senator Warner of Virginia, who is one of the earliest and most dedicated congressional supporters of the project, to chair and

moderate a meeting among the VVMF and the critics of the design, including members of Congress, in an attempt to accommodate their concerns. After lengthy discussions, and with the skillful leadership of Senator Warner, a consensus was achieved by which we hope to move forward on schedule toward completion of the memorial. Under the consensus, the Memorial Fund agreed to add an American flag and a sculpture of a serviceman at the site. In turn, the construction of the basic design that had been approved would move forward on schedule.

Last Monday we met with Secretary Watt to explain the agreement. He expressed his pleasure that accommodation had been reached and indicated his willingness to support the basic concept and the concept of the additions. However, these additions are, by law, subject to approval of this Commission. Secretary Watt, before issuing a construction permit, now seeks your acceptance of this new concept. We are also painfully aware these additions to the design may themselves spark controversy, for it is rare that the design of any major national memorial can develop immediate consensus as to its potential power, appropriateness, and aesthetic excellence. We wish to avoid such a controversy. We, therefore, want to assure you we will do everything in our power to assure the design, placement, and appropriateness of these additions will be developed in the manner that will reflect the beauty of the design.

We have begun to design alternate proposals for locating the flag and sculpture. We have reviewed all former designs and approved all. Senator Warner will chair a meeting later this week and attempt to identify one or more models as the accepted model. We invite this Commission's participation in the final selection on this matter. When they have been developed, they will be submitted for your detailed review and approval. We hope to complete the process of review and development so that it will be completed for dedication on Veterans Day this November.

Your acceptance of the concept of these additions is needed today in order that the construction of the basic design may be begun this month and completed by November.

Concurring with the Memorial Fund in this testimony are the American Legion, the Marine Corps League, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mrs. Regina Wilkes of the American Gold Star Mothers, the Heritage Foundation, and Brigadier General George Price and Mr. Copelous, for the Marine Corps League, is here today, as well as the other spokesmen for the other organizations. In the interest of saving time, they have not prepared to speak, but will be happy to answer questions. Some, I think, have prepared written statements for the record.

I wish to note Mrs. Wilkes, General Price, the American Legion and VFW have been continuous supporters for the project, while Mr. Copelous, the Marine Corps League, have

been among those who most strongly believe the additions are necessary.

The presence of all here today in support of the basic design and the additions represent a coming together for the common goal of expeditiously completing the project.

In conclusion, I thank you again for considering this matter today, and on behalf of the 2.7 million Americans that served their country in Vietnam, I ask that we make it possible to proceed with the construction of this long overdue tribute.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

We would be happy to have submitted for the record any of these statements that you referred to.

Since we are here not to review a design, which is our normal function, but simply to answer a letter from the Secretary, I have drafted a reply which I would like to read to my fellow members and have put in the record, and then we can see what the Commission's action might be.

"Dear Mr. Secretary:

"We have your letter of February 25, seeking the reaction of the Commission of Fine Arts to the concept of the addition on the east side of the Veterans Memorial of two elements, a flag, and a piece of sculpture.

difficulty in



rendering a judgment without a specific design to review. However, we believe it is possible to find a solution for adding those elements in such a way as to obtain the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts as required by Public Law 26-297.

"The Commission has not yet had submitted to it the interpretive element that will welcome the visitor and guide those who are seeking the location of a specific name. Especially for those whose lives have been affected most by the Vietnam experience, this area will, in effect, serve as an entry point for visitors to the memorial. The development of this might well provide a fruitful area to examine in relation to the new elements.

"The Commission reaffirms its approval for the design as approved to date. As you point out in your letter, the basic design of the memorial is unchanged. For this reason, no further approval by the Commission of Fine Arts is required as a precondition to action by the Department of the Interior. The Commission looks forward to reviewing ways in which additional elements could be designed and positioned so as not to abrogate the integrity and magnificence of the existing design concept, which it will be impossible fully to appreciate until those elements have been realized at their full

and very impressive scale.

"Sincerely, J. Carter Brown, Chairman."

What is the reaction of the members to this?

Do you have copies of that you can circulate so they can take a look at it?

(Copies of draft distributed to Commissioners)

MR. STONE: I think it is a very eloquent statement, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Any additions or amendments to it that anyone would like to suggest?

Maybe, to get it on the table, someone should propose adoption and then we can throw the discussion open.

MR. STONE: I so move.

MRS. BURSON: Second.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Any comments from members of the community?

MR. MAYER: Mr. Chairman, I am Mike K. Mayer, with the Marine Corps League. Within your letter I believe it implies that the flag staff and the serviceman figure should be a part of the memorial. Our position in the Marine Corps League is that the service of the man who served in Vietnam and particularly the ones that returned, was just as honorable as the man who served in any war. Our reservations with the design was to create a national monument which makes a statement about the war. We are really burying the war by having

a subsurface structure.

There were a lot of reservations concerning the design. If, in fact, the staff and the fighting figure are separate from the memorial, I believe that the opposition is going to continue, and I believe within the agreements that were reached between those that supported the design and those that were opposed to the design, the compromise, I believe, was such that the staff of the flag and the fighting figure or serviceman figure would be incorporated within the design of the memorial and not a separate memorial and apart from it.

GENERAL PRICE: Mr. Chairman, I am General Price. May I make ~~one~~ comment? I appreciate what the gentleman has said. I believe it is important that we ~~review~~ <sup>as</sup> the entire two acres ~~of~~ the monument and not just those items which are being constructed there, and particularly in the perspective that we recognize the entire two acres as symbolic of all of the service of Americans in Vietnam, and not just in that one context. I believe we can reach agreement on this. We are going to meet on this tomorrow, and I think it can be worked out.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: I would like to say, on behalf of all of the members of the Commission, we feel as strongly as anyone about the glorious service that was rendered to the nation by those who served their country in this war, and certainly it is not our intention to approve any design of

any memorial that would in any way denigrate that. But, as we have specified in this letter, it really is not the proper moment for us to be able to be very specific in our reaction because we don't have anything visual to act on, and this is the nature of this body, to act on visual, rather than verbal, data, so that that is where we stand.

Are there any other comments?

We have a long agenda ahead of us.

MR. DUBEK: I would just like to comment that I -- of course, I don't have a copy of the draft in front of me -- I believe it is important that your letter respond to the Secretary's letter. As I hear it, I believe that it does, and as I understand your letter, it does, indeed, accept the concept of the flag and the sculpture at the site.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: That is true.

MR. DUBEK: Thank you.

MR. BURSON: I move we send the letter.

MR. NOVAK: Second.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: All in favor?

Okay, thank you very much.

We move now to the next item on the agenda, which is submitted by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Commission. This is the Westminster Development at 6th Street and Indiana Avenue, called the Pennsylvania Triangle Project.

MR. ATHERTON: This project is being submitted by