

**Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee Meeting**

**Tuesday, January 12, 2021**

**3:00 – 4:15 p.m.**

**ZOOM**

At 3:02 p.m., Chairman Ron Hull began the meeting by stating that a notice to the press had been given, and that the Open Meetings Act had been printed. Chairman Ron Hull welcomed guest, Anne Dorsheimer, Executive Assistant to Trevor Jones.

**Roll Call**

**Present: Rod Bates, Ron Hull, Trevor Jones, Aaron Wyatt**

**Sara Crook joined the meeting at 3:14 p.m.**

**Guests Present: Katie Brossy, Judi Gaiashkibos, Ruth Haley Keene, Ashley Olson**

**Not Present: Ron Naugle**

Chairman Hull wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed Katie Brossy and Littleton Alston to the meeting. He stated that we look over Laurie Smith Camp's investment in this project to see where we are at financially. He asked Trevor to go step by step through the Financial Report from the copies Anne sent as an attachment.

Trevor Jones stated that after we cashed in Laurie's donation of stock, we ended up with \$199,000 and that this money gets invested with the State Investment Council. He noted that over the period that it has been sitting there, we have earned \$4,176. Trevor stated that we have \$122,136 that is current and we still owe Littleton Alston another \$75,000, so our projected balance will be \$47,000.

Chairman Hull reiterated that Laurie Smith Camp wanted her funds to be used for three things: Statue, the Pedestal and shipment to Washington D.C. He inquired about \$4,000 in the category of Educational Services. Trevor assured Chairman Hull that it probably just gets classified that way for the State's Chart of Accounts. Trevor clarified that the Educational expenses are those paid to the Sculptor finalist to select Littleton and for travel money for out of state sculptors to come in and be finalized in that process.

Chairman Hull reminisced with Ashley Olson, stating that some time ago, Laurie gave him a book about Omaha and one member of the family. He opened to a certain page and it said, 'Dear Ron, if Willa Cather is right and the road is all, I'm glad we got to share it.' He expressed that, aren't we lucky for the people that we share it with?

Chairman Hull inquired with Katie Brossy and Littleton regarding the status of statue and on the remaining things we have to do, when it becomes bronze and what that timeline is. He also posed the question on how to honor Laurie? He then asked Littleton to take over.

Littleton Alston expressed sadness that she will not see the piece in bronze. The work itself is in mold stage now, and the bronze will be conducted in London in another 2-3 months, and it will be 8 months before completion. He plans to send samples to the Architect at the Capitol early.

Discussion ensued regarding ways to honor Laurie on the statue. Littleton reassured the group that after the work is installed, he can do some things that only he knows but that he wouldn't say anything now so as not to incriminate himself. It was noted that the name could be inscribed on the pedestal or on the inside of the pedestal; that we could etch the name in granite, or in the bronze. The group concluded that there are many ways to incorporate Laurie's name that Littleton can choose from and it will not raise any issues.

Katie Brossy commented on the process of approval at the Capitol. She stated that in 8 months, this will be done with committee approval, and then at least a month for federal process. She explained that final pictures go to the Architect of the Capitol, then a letter to Joint Library and then they have to approve it. She cited September and October for final approval at the earliest, and that the unveiling will have a date from the Speaker's Office, also with consideration of COVID restrictions.

**Motion to approve inscribing Judge Smith Camp's name on the base of the statue that will be attached to the pedestal.**

**Motioned by Sara Crook, Second by Tim Heller.**

**Roll Call: Ron Hull, Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Trevor Jones, Aaron Wyatt.**

**Not Present: Ron Naugle**

Littleton Alston explained that this is an insurance policy, in case rejected and the base inscription cannot be done. He went into further detail by explaining that putting the name in the Walking Stick is putting it in bronze as part of the work, and he can do that in a wax before he puts it into the bronze. He will proceed as though the name is on the pedestal, but will still be in the bronze later.

Katie Brossy also added that we don't have to ask for their approval if it is not visible. Anything shown on the four sides of the pedestal, we don't have to tell them about; only on what is visible. Chairman Hull inquired whether we needed a motion for this to be an action, and Tim Heller explained that this is pertaining more to artistic license.

Chairman Hull asked Katie Brossy and Judi Gaiashkibos to begin an explanation regarding the Dedication ceremony that is going to be up to the standard with the State of Nebraska.

Judi reiterated that she will discuss the Official one-hour ceremony that will be at the Visitors' Center and not Statuary Hall. All has to be approved by the Speaker and there's a need to select a Chaplain, a song and a reading. She mentioned that Nancy Pelosi is the emcee, as well as one Senator and one Congressman that is chosen to speak for a few to five minutes. Options range from Senator Fortenberry, Senator Fisher, and Congressman Adrian Smith. The Governor will be present as well as two other representatives of the Committee's choosing and approved by the Speaker's Office. Judi suggested Suzanne Shore, the Governor's wife, or Laura Bush who would raise awareness to a higher level. Judi also emphasized the guest list as key to manage by staff, whether at History Nebraska or the Willa Cather Foundation.

Judi also mentioned the number of people permitted on the stage during the unveiling is limited, so that will need to be thought about in the future. The artist generally is in the seating gallery, as noted by Katie Brossy. Judi noted that having Laurie's children involved in the unveiling is ideal, and this was agreed upon by the Committee. Chairman Hull stated he had contact with a daughter in Seattle and Jonathan in Lincoln. Katie also mentioned time is key in the program, as you only have one hour for a national anthem, a reading, a music piece and presenters on stage with the rope.

Katie Brossy raised the question of having the unveiling in Emancipation Hall, which is down the steps from where Willa Cather will be at. This would be done at an additional cost, but it has a high ceiling and a lot of light.

Trevor Jones highly recommended this space. If in Emancipation Hall, then the space multiplies exponentially, in terms of how many people you can have with some sort of a comfort level. When he and Katie talked to the Architect of the Capitol in February, they said they would just move Willa Cather up to her permanent spot in the middle of that night. He explained that this is something we should plan and budget for.

Littleton Alston recommended Dr. Cohen and Duke of Ellington School of the Arts for their Choir to sing in the program. This school is the 2<sup>nd</sup> best Arts high school in the country. Dr. Cohen thought it would be wonderful if their choir could come over for the Dedication. It is the same high school Dave Chappell attended and very high profile.

Littleton Alston also inquired about unveiling the cloth on who provides, whether the Capitol Architect, or Artist, and Katie Brossy confirmed that the Capitol provides this and it is a gold cloth. She stated they place a box around the statue so no one can see it and that portion of the Capitol is off limits for tours.

Ashley Olson commented that if the Committee decided to go the route of having the Duke Ellington Choir, or incorporating music to the Dedication Ceremony in some way, there are a number of Commissions that have adapted Willa Cather's words to some music. Chairman Hull agreed that there are any number of musical adaptations so far, and two or three operas have been written. Ashley noted it may be more memorable than a reading.

Sara Crook expressed interest in the inclusion of the Duke of Ellington School of the Arts, but believed we are far enough out that we don't have to make a decision or connection today. She commented that if we are talking at the earliest, September or October next Fall and then we still have to set a date, if we were to decide on the program, we can contact someone by late this summer, because the choir will need to practice. However, she believes it is too early to make that contact.

Judi reminded Ron to select a still photographer that will take photos, and have that in your budget. Ron said he was counting on NET covering this for us in Washington, but agreed that will need to be done. Chairman Hull asked Judi to elaborate on the Reception.

Judi explained that a Capitol representative works with you to use their food vendors, flowers and tablecloths. She stated that you can put in a bit about the Artist, Willa, your reception program, your speakers and your partners (not donors), and a photo and biography of Willa Cather. She also explained that at the reception, you will have Willa Cather coins and possibly three different ideas: Willa Cather Foundation, UNL, or the State of Nebraska. If the State of Nebraska is used, then permission must be obtained from the Secretary of State's Office. Trevor Jones confirmed that we have done this. She stated that these coins are photo-edged with logo and used as a gift to hand out to people, and you can have Ronnie Green from UNL, or the Committee, or History Nebraska could hand them out to people. Judi explained that the cost is minimal and it is a nice token of appreciation.

Katie Brossy recommended the Visitor's Center for the reception due to close proximity to Emancipation Hall. She reminded the Committee that there may be more restrictions and it was also mentioned that it may not be available. Chairman Hull asked Katie Brossy to put in the word that we want that location once a date is set, and Katie confirmed that she will assist. Judi mentioned that it is a long day, with the exception of a one-hour photo lag, and it is good to have locations close in proximity.

Chairman Hull went on to mention also that at some point, we've got to bring in a representative of Chancellor Ronnie Green's office, when we discuss details of reception. He stated that they are paying the bill is sure they will have a couple of requests. He asserted that they will be an advisor to us. He concluded that this covers every agenda item he had today.

Aaron Wyatt inquired about whether or not to dissolve subcommittees to move forward on this process. Discussion ensued regarding whether subcommittees were part of the Hall of Fame Commission to use for promotion and publicity or under the purview of the Willa Cather Committee.

After some discussion, Fundraising, Public Relations, Ceremony, and Dedication and Reception subcommittees were cited as a few. Sara Crook mentioned that subcommittees can come up with next step plans, but before proceeding, one more general meeting with enough moving parts to break it down. She said this works more smoothly than one large group

deciding, and that no one wants to be dictatorial. She finalized that recommendations could be made to the full body.

Chairman Hull thanked Judi, Katie and Littleton as senior advisors on this and asked if there were further comments. He stated that the next step is emails about subcommittees. He said that we'll keep all these things and mull over and come up with great ideas and bring attention to the event. Further, he said we will wait until the Minutes are done by Anne, and in the meantime, we will get committee assignments and decide when to meet and address issues responsible for each. Judi also mentioned that with regard to food items and menus, this task is best handled by one person as opposed to the large group, and that such details can be finalized with one person from the University, or with the group.

Katie wrapped up the meeting regarding invitations in response to a question by Littleton. She stated that we will decide on what the location is going to be and then how many total people can be in that space, then invite all members of Congress to the event. She remarked that there is a waiting game to see how many members will actually show up and RSVP. She then stated they will ask the Committee to come up with a list of priority people. As an example, she explained that the Committee may put together a list of 200 people, and number 1 through 200 as priorities and then depending on how many members of Congress actually RSVP, they will turn to that list to send out invites.

Katie expressed that timing is important and that Nebraska will need to buy tickets and come out. The Committee will have the opportunity to put together your priority list. In her last experience, not many people came; out of staff and Congresspersons, 10 people came in addition to the Speaker. It is not a huge amount of people but they also send their staff and that kind of changes the options. She stated that it will be up to the Committee to come up with that list.

Ashley Olson remarked that it has been a long time since the PR Committee has done any outreach to the press. She wondered if there is an opportunity here to reveal, at least digitally, a version of Willa Cather, and if that is something this Committee wants to do. She knows Chris' team and her team collaborated on a press piece, but that it might be something to think about, as we roll over into the new year, with people being eager for good and happy news.

Littleton Alston concluded the meeting by stating any footage of the pouring of bronze in film would be nice to have, and that he won't submit anything to Dr. Cohen before sending to the Committee first. Nothing will be sent directly to her without her knowledge.

Chairman Hull told Littleton to ask Christine on next steps and what able to do for film. Littleton Alston stated that we could section off and have a breaking of the shell away from Willa Cather's face as a dramatic moment. He promised that he will bring ideas to the Committee ahead of time.

Chairman Hull asked if there were any questions. Aaron Wyatt stated that **the** subcommittees were established on July 16, 2018. Those minutes have the subcommittee assignments.

**Motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Motioned by Sara Crook, Second by Rod Bates.**

**Roll Call: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Ron Hull, Trevor Jones, Aaron Wyatt**