

Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee Meeting

Friday, January 28, 2022

1:00 – 2:00 p.m. CST

History Nebraska
1500 R Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dr. Don R. Gerlach Capitol View Room & Zoom

Minutes

Chairman Hull began the meeting at 1:04 p.m. by stating that a notice to the press had been given and that compliance with the Open Meetings Act has been satisfied.

Chairman Hull then asked for a Roll Call.

Roll Call

Present: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Aaron Wyatt

Not Present: Trevor Jones

Assistant to Commission: Anne Dorsheimer

Chairman Hull asked for a motion to approve the minutes on November 19, 2021.

Motion by Rod Bates

Second by Aaron Wyatt

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Aaron Wyatt

Not Present: Trevor Jones

No: None

Motion Adopted

Chairman Hull asked for a motion for Littleton to produce maquettes based on the Willa Cather Statue.

Motion by Sara Crook

Second by Aaron Wyatt

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Aaron Wyatt

Not Present: Trevor Jones

No: None

Motion Adopted

Discussion: Status of the Willa Cather Statue - Littleton Alston

Littleton stated that the statue and the pedestal are sealed in his studio. These are disconnected now, because we sent a note to Katie Brossy requesting some instruction on shipping regarding when to ship and who to use. Also, given the nature of the U.S. Capitol now, it's been a number of years Littleton was awarded the Commission and things have changed since then, it has added more complexity on the

Washington end, especially at the U.S. Capitol. He will continue to communicate more with Katie and he will glean some things from this meeting as to how to proceed and who to contact and who would be vetted and not vetted, because of the nature of the status of the U.S. Capitol. He noted we are doing two things at the U.S. Capitol: installing and de-installing. He wants to make sure that everything goes absolutely smoothly and the Willa Cather statue gets in safely. If it is going to be in the large hall, then it is to be assembled there and that Morton is returned to Nebraska safely. He stated that we have our hands at the ready to go to the next step.

Approval of Architect of the Capitol and other information – Katie Brossy

Katie Brossy spoke with the Speaker's office and the staff and they stated that a spring installation is not likely. The best time frame is summer. August is not an option, because they will be in recess and they take a week off for the 4th of July. Katie suggested June or July. Chief Standing Bear was the last statute to be unveiled before everything closed down. A lot of other states are in the queue and in different stages, but none seem ready. Katie suggested pushing for June or July.

If the Committee decides to have the unveiling in Emancipation Hall, it does require a Joint Resolution, which happens all the time. She noted there would be additional rigging fees associated with moving the Willa Cather statue to the Emancipation Hall location, removing Morton, and then moving to her permanent location.

Littleton stated his original projections on installation have changed, and it will be more money to get the statue to Washington and perform a double move. Chairman Hull asked Katie if she had an idea of how much time might be given before a date is set. Katie answered a month, at least.

Littleton asked the Committee to allow him the opportunity talk with installers to obtain details and then report back to the Committee. The Committee gave permission for Littleton to do so. Katie mentioned she would put Littleton in contact with Dr. Cohen with regard to order and timeline.

Tim Heller asked Anne Dorsheimer to send Littleton's original contract to everyone next week.

Katie stated that another option is to have the unveiling in Statuary Hall, which is where Standing Bear was unveiled, and this would not require a Joint Resolution. The drawback for Statuary Hall is the number of people who can attend. Full capacity is 200. The Speaker also offered the option of doing the unveiling virtually.

Chairman Hull affirmed that the Committee does not want to have a virtual unveiling.

Katie asked if the Committee has any preference between either Emancipation Hall or Statuary Hall?

Chairman Hull prefers Statuary Hall. Sara Crook commented on COVID protocols, and that we want the largest space possible, so Emancipation Hall is preferred. Ashley Olson noted that Emancipation Hall is a lovely space in her opinion, and it is less difficult to lose your way to the Reception.

Ruth Haley Keene asked what the capacity for the Visitor's Center will be? Katie answered that Pre-COVID, it is around 500 - 700. Katie also stated that Emancipation Hall is the Visitor's Center. Willa Cather is on the left and then a person walks down the stairs and there is big open room that opens up

for tours, and it is 500-700. Ruth inquired if there is any way to do the unveiling where Willa Cather is to be placed? Katie noted that it is not a great location for unveiling, because it is not a wide space and the ceilings are not as high.

Sub-committee for Dedication Ceremony – Chair, Ron Hull

Katie stated that the Speaker's office sends out the invites to U.S. Senators and Congressmen be a part of the ceremony and then asks them to provide their comments to the Speaker's office. The Speaker's office compiles everything into one notebook and everyone's speech is in that notebook. It is scripted down to the minute.

Chairman Hull asked Ashley to write to Former First Lady Laura Bush that the statue is finished and that the Committee would love to have her come and read a passage that is up to four minutes.

Katie stated that the Speaker wants a list on who we want to include in the ceremony, with notes for each indicating why each represents the state. Chairman Hull mentioned that Gabrielle Union is the second option and inquired with Mike Zeleny regarding contact information. Mike stated that the Athletic Department is contacting her cousin, who lives near Hickman, Nebraska, in order to get the best contact information for Gabrielle. Mike is working on it and hoping to get it in the next couple of days.

Chairman Hull asked for any further questions and Katie stated she intends to show the Committee what the ceremony would look like and then fill in what we need to. The Speaker asked about Senators, and she mentioned U.S. Senator Fischer as a senior member from the Senate. She also noted U.S. Congressman Adrian Smith is within the district, and it was also noted that his office is on board. U.S. Congressman Fortenberry has seniority on the House side. Since U.S. Congressman Adrian Smith is in the district, we will submit a wish list for U.S. Congressman Adrian Smith.

The Committee discussed Laura Black, Becky Boesin, and Marg Helgenberger as other options if Laura Bush and Gabrielle Union are not available.

Sub-committee for the Reception – Chair, Sara Crook

Sara Crook remarked that the subcommittee cannot move forward without dates. She also deferred to Ashley regarding short biographies and what she needs for the booklet. She also noted that a speaker for the reception cannot be chosen until a speaker is chosen for the dedication.

Chairman Hull clarified that UNL would choose the reception speakers. Andy Jewell or Melissa Holmstead were discussed as potential speakers.

Sara inquired with Ashley regarding the booklet. Ashley stated she has a solid outline. Mike Zeleny offered to draft a piece about the Cather Archives and then share it with Ashley to edit.

Ashley raised the point of tribute or memorial to Laurie Smith Camp, and that she can take a stab at writing it. Chairman Hull had contacted her daughter, Abby, to write a tribute to her mother. He stated that this is taken care of and she will get it to us by February 15. He noted that we need a photograph of her. Littleton stated he wanted to do a small one-foot cameo profile relief of Laurie Smith Camp that he would give to the family, which could be appropriate through the Cather Center to honor her and connect the artist out of gratitude and living memory of her in some way.

Sub-committee for the Invitation list – Chair, Aaron Wyatt

Aaron Wyatt stated that the subcommittee did not meet, so there is nothing to report on or give regarding updates. He sent out an invitation list with members in the morning to take notes in terms of prioritizing the invitation list, and that they will discuss notes in a longer meeting in February.

Aaron inquired regarding the Legislature and timeline and what the Committee is authorized to do, and if the statue is not placed in 2022, do we have the authority to continue? Sara Crook noted that it is a 5-year window, and the legislation passed in 2018, and if the statue does not get placed in 2022, then we have until 2023.

Chairman Hull asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Sara Crook

Second by Tim Heller

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Aaron Wyatt

Not Present: Trevor Jones

No: None

Motion Adopted

Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee Meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.