

Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee Minutes

September 21, 2021

3:00 p.m. CDT

Zoom and In-Person

Dr. Don R. Gerlach Capitol View Room

1500 R Street

Lincoln, NE 68506

Chairperson Hull called the Meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. CDT.

Motion for Approval of Minutes for Friday, July 30, 2021, and Minutes as corrected for May 21, 2021, and March 26, 2021:

Motion: Rod Bates

Second: Sara Crook

Roll Call Vote with Motion and Second:

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

No: 0

Not Present: Trevor Jones

Chairperson Hull made clarification that Ron Naugle has moved to Colorado and is no longer a member of the Committee. Chairperson Hull asked Anne to follow up with the Governor's office regarding re-appointments and new appointments to the Commission.

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

Not Present: Trevor Jones

Guests Present: Littleton Alston, Katie Brossy, Ruth Haley Keene, Ashley Olson, Mike Zeleny

Aide to Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee: Anne Dorsheimer

Status of the Willa Cather Statue: Littleton Alston

Sculptor Littleton Alston reported on the status of the statue. The statue has been cast and is in the patina phase and is ready to be stored in the studio. The granite base is nearing completion. Everything will be stored securely in his studio. Littleton asked if there are any events that the Committee would like to do while the piece is here? He has been invited by the Nebraska Cultural Endowment to speak about the project. It is from the cultural endowment for their board and it is fundraising for the Willa Cather legacy. Littleton asked if he can show the images, but not reveal the work while he talks about the piece and the process.

Chairperson Hull: Will it stay with you until the date is set with the Dedication? Then will it be shipped?

Littleton Alston: The statue will stay at Littleton's studio until it is time to install it in Washington. In a month or so, everything will be ready for shipping. He will have to use specific shippers and installers with clearance and access to Statuary Hall.

Tim Heller: In showing pictures at this gallery, are we defeating the purpose of the unveiling in Washington?

Littleton Alston: Littleton stated that he is not thinking of exposing much, but is thinking of Marquette images. Littleton will be very judicious. There will be no damage in any way.

Katie Brossy: When the full statue and pedestal arrive in your office, in terms of the pictures that you are going to be providing on all four sides, are you envisioning putting the statue on the pedestal or are you going to do pictures of each separately?

Littleton Alston: Littleton will do it separately. He will ask Dr. Cohen if she wants the full assemblage.

Katie Brossy: When are you expecting the pedestal to be done?

Littleton Alston: Littleton stated that right now they are dealing with the lettering and the fabrication.

Katie Brossy: Katie stated that we will not be able to submit documentation to request the final approval to D.C. until we have pictures of the pedestal, and that we are hoping to submit at the end of October for a final request for approval.

Littleton Alston: Littleton confirmed that he will get the Committee a hard date for that. He also stated that he has to be ready to ship. Littleton will communicate with Dr. Cohen about the mounting of the photographs on the email. He noted that we will have to have the pedestal first, before proceeding with photographs.

Katie Brossy: Can you cc me on that email to her please?

Chairperson Hull: When at some point, when you have all of this in your art studio, can we come to Omaha? And have a meeting there?

Littleton Alston: Littleton responded affirmatively to the aforementioned questions.

Sara Crook: Sara noted that it has to be an official meeting, because otherwise we violate the Open Meetings Law. If we have a quorum there, we can make it a meeting. She asked if it should be early November? Her second point related to the Nebraska Cultural Endowment event. Sara would prefer to show her the pieces of the Marquette, but to not show the whole figure in Marquette form. She feels the whole sculpture shouldn't be seen until the public can see it as the statue is unveiled.

Tim Heller concurs. Chairperson Hull concurs.

Littleton Alston: Littleton thought that makes it pretty simple. He suggested that he can also use sketches or some general concepts.

Sara Crook: Sara commented that she prefers the big bang to come when the statue is fully installed.

Littleton Alston: Littleton noted that a lot of imagery is already done at Nebraska Public Television. Christine Lesiak came out with a crew and filmed the latter stages of his work.

Littleton Alston: Littleton will make a couple of quick calls to find the exact date on the actual granite being completed, because he has to load it on a truck and drive it back, and then offload it.

Aaron Wyatt: Are we potentially missing an opportunity to show this off before it leaves? And not allowing those individuals who cannot travel, to see it? Is this worth having a discussion? The Standing Bear statue was reduced in scope of the original piece that was commissioned. Do we want an opportunity to stir up interest before it leaves?

Chairperson Hull: Chairperson Hull remarked on the sculptor and clay statue, and how they invited people to watch him working on the statue before it was completed. It was a nice event, he noted, and lasted a couple of days.

Rod Bates: Katie, what is your reaction to this?

Katie Brossy: Katie responded that the initial unveiling was down at the mall, so people had already seen the statue. It was an exact replica of the one on the mall and the one on their homeland. So, it wasn't as much as seeing the statue for the first time, as is in this instance. She sees both sides. She stated that we may want this to be a really big event, with the cloth coming off.

Chairperson Hull: Chairperson Hull noted that we need to make this an item at the next committee meeting in November, unless we call a special meeting before. He asked the Committee how to handle this?

Ashley Olson: Ashley suggested that we should think about showing the clay version, but not the finished product. She inquired if it was a line in the sand that we could draw to make D.C. special and still give Nebraska an idea of it?

Chairperson Hull: Chairperson Hull noted that it was in the film that we did here and this has been broadcast in the state a number of times.

Tim Heller: Tim believes this is an acceptable compromise.

Rod Bates: Rod compared it to rehearsal and part of what we've been doing and it's not going to hurt the public before they see it for the first time. He noted that we are still unveiling to the public and 99% are going to be seeing it for the first time.

Aaron Wyatt: Aaron surmised that the Willa Cather Foundation could use this as fundraising leverage as well. He appreciates the discussion.

Sara Crook: Sara thought Ashley's offer is a great compromise between the divergent views, and showing the clay might be a good compromise.

Chairperson Hull moved to the next item on the Agenda.

Invitation Subcommittee: Aaron Wyatt

Members: Aaron Wyatt, Rod Bates, Trevor Jones, Ashley Olson, Ruth Haley Keene

Discussion

The invitation list will be a living and revolving document up until the last few days.

Chairperson Hull noted that Judi Gaiashkibos had challenges with the Standing Bear invitation list. Katie Brossy confirmed that it is challenging, because you have to come up with your own initial list and then send to all members of the House and Senate. How many tickets are available until there are RSVPs for House and Senate members? How many tickets are we actually going to get? Hopefully, there will be more opportunities to have additional people there. Aaron's invitation list is at about 200, give or take right now. He noted that they have been aggressively accounting for people, as in for members of the current legislature, for example.

Katie Brossy mentioned that we will have constant contact with the Speaker's office, and we will know how many people have RSVP'd. Then, she mentioned that we will send them our spreadsheet and they will send out the invitations. As they start to get RSVPs, then they have the potential to demonstrate more availability for the invitation list. It is last minute juggling all the way up until the day before the event. It can be difficult getting the guest list confirmed and making travel plans.

Chairperson Hull thanked Aaron Wyatt and moved to the next item on the Agenda.

Reception Subcommittee: Sara Crook

Members: Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ashley Olson, Mike Zeleny, Ron Hull

Discussion: Status of Plans and Details for Reception

Sara Crook reported that Ashley and her staff are working on the booklet and she needed profiles from entities such as Littleton Alston, UNL, History Nebraska, and the Willa Cather Foundation.

Regarding name tags, the subcommittee decided to state boldly 'Willa Cather Statue Dedication at the U.S. Capitol' based on Ruth Haley Keene's recommendation. She noted that the subcommittee is giving this recommendation to the full Committee. This statement would go across the top, and in the middle would be the guest name, and then at the bottom, there will be three logos (UNL, History Nebraska, Willa Cather Foundation). She reiterated that the subcommittee is recommending this to the full committee for approval on the nametags. They also thought that we would use the same printer for the booklet, because there is money set aside within the budget to pay for printing costs. She suggested that if we use the booklet vendor, then all the name tags with the booklet will coordinate and look professional. Those members who are not involved in making remarks could be at the entrance table to give away name tags. This can be Mike Zeleny, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, and Rod Bates.

Sara asked how to distribute the books? Ashley made a suggestion that if a person has not already read a particular work for Willa Cather, then that person can pick one up for reading pleasure, rather than having it assigned to them. Last but not least, Sara stated that we will have some kind of prairie flower, or sunflower arrangement. She commented that if you can find a sticker on the chair, then you can help yourself to a flower arrangement. This distribution is the least cumbersome and least high maintenance.

Sara Crook asked for approval for the design of the name tags as proposed, and Chairperson Hull asked if there were any questions.

Subcommittee motion to approve recommendation:

Roll Call Vote

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

No: 0

Not Present: Trevor Jones

Ruth Haley Keene: Do we have a substitute in case the Bishop cannot speak?

Chairperson Hull stated that he has talked with the Bishop's assistant in New York. If the schedule for the Bishop does not work, we would ask the Bishop to suggest a likely Episcopalian Bishop from Washington. His office has agreed to do that for us. Chairperson Hull also noted that we want Former First Lady Laura Bush for the dedication as well, but may need a replacement if she cannot commit.

Chairperson Hull moved to the next item on the Agenda.

Dedication Ceremony Subcommittee: Ron Hull

Members: Tim Heller, Ashley Olson, Rod Bates, Ron Hull

Discussion: Status Plans for Ceremony

Chairperson Hull clarified that we do not have to take care of the color guard, and that Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office will provide a color guard for us. He also clarified that we do not need to provide for the National Anthem, should we choose not to. Katie Brossy confirmed that a representative from the military would be there to sing the National Anthem.

Katie Brossy mentioned that Speaker Nancy Pelosi will send invitations to the most senior Senator and then work with the Committee to select a congressperson to provide remarks. The Speaker will handle all invitations to the members, as well as to our Governor.

The Committee will wait to reach out to the Governor's office until we have final approval from the Joint Library Committee. As it will be fully approved, the Speaker's office will be reaching out to the Governor, and then we can work with the leaders' schedules.

Chairperson Hull confirmed the Committee would meet again in November.

Ruth Haley Keene asked Aaron, with regard to the long list, is it ranked or vetted based on priority? Aaron stated that it is solely a compilation at this point. Katie verified that at some point, the Committee will want to re-organize the list based on priority, depending on numbers and how many invitations and according to circumstances of COVID-19 spacing issues, or general security issues at the U.S. Capitol.

Chairperson Hull thanked Littleton Alston and then asked for a motion for adjournment at 3:50 p.m. CDT.

Motion: Aaron Wyatt

Second: Rod Bates

Roll Call Vote:

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

No: 0

Not Present: Trevor Jones