

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

**March 26, 2021**

**1:30 p.m. – 2:35 p.m. CST**

**ZOOM**

At 1:31 p.m., Chairman Ron Hull called the meeting to order, stating that a notice to the press had been given, and that the Open Meetings Act had been printed.

Chairman Hull asked for a Roll Call Vote.

**Roll Call:**

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

Not Present: Ron Naugle

Guests: Ruth Haley Keene, Ashley Olson

Assistant to the Committee: Anne Dorsheimer

**Approval of Minutes.**

Chairman Hull asked for a Motion to Approve Minutes for the January 12, 2021 Meeting.

Motioned by Tim Heller, Seconded by Sara Crook.

Roll Call:

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

No: 0

Not Present: Ron Naugle

Chairman Hull asked for a Motion to Approve Minutes for the February 23, 2021 Meeting.

Sara Crook stated to include Trevor Jones as not present upon adjournment, as a correction to the Minutes.

Motion to Approve Minutes for the February 23, 2021 Meeting, as amended.

Motioned by Tim Heller, Seconded by Sara Crook

Roll Call:

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

No: 0

Not Present: Ron Naugle

Chairman Hull moved to the first item on the Agenda, which is the Reception Program Committee, chaired by Sara Crook.

**Reception Program Subcommittee:**

Sara remarked that everyone was able to meet, including Mike Zeleny, who is representing UNL and Chancellor Green. She confirmed that a budget of \$30,000 has been established for the reception. Clarification and discussion surrounded Emancipation Hall to do the unveiling, and whether the reception can be in the Visitor's Hall. She noted that the subcommittee indicated to do it in the same room.

Chairman Hull remarked that Katie Brossy can explain the differences, and Trevor Jones volunteered to explain now.

Trevor stated that the space for the reception is not guaranteed in the Capitol complex until the date is set. Katie Brossy recommended to hold the reception in the hall that is right above the Emancipation Hall, however there is no guarantee this will be available. There are multiple reception areas. As soon as a date is chosen, the next step is to book the closest location. Chairman Hull volunteered to serve as Emcee, as Chairman of the Committee. The subcommittee came up with a list of Speakers, since not everyone is participating in the Dedication Ceremony. Chairman Hull would say a few words as Chair of the Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee, Ashley Olson as Executive Director, Littleton Alston as the Sculptor, Chancellor Green, and Sen. Burke Harr (LB 807). Also, in speaking with Mike Zeleny from the University of Nebraska, Mike recommended a scholar to read some of Willa Cather's best works. Mike will check with the University and see if there are any recommendations to bring back to the subcommittee.

The subcommittee decided that the reception is the best place to have Former First Lady Laura Bush speak, since she will have more time than in the Dedication Ceremony. If Committee members like this list, the subcommittee will contact Former First Lady Laura Bush immediately to gauge interest, even though a date is not set. If not, Tim Heller can offer a list of notables that have a Nebraska connection, which the subcommittee has compiled. At this point, Sara Crook remarked that the subcommittee will keep a running list until we know if Former First Lady Laura Bush is interested or not.

Chairman Hull mentioned that Mike Zeleny suggested inviting the University of Nebraska Press and to have a display of Cather books.

The next part of the discussion involved the program booklet. Ashley Olson volunteered to do this. The subcommittee discussed a cover design, the statue, and an inside cover quote. The subcommittee favored the passage from *My Ántonia*, which is on the tablet within her hand on the statue. An artist statement from Littleton as well as a photo of him should be included. Also, the subcommittee would include Judge Laurie Smith Camp's story however the family deems appropriate, as well as the Cather Foundation's Story, UNL's Story, and History of Nebraska's story (all ½ page), and then include the Committee with a list of everyone involved in this process. Sara Crook asked if the Committee had questions or if anything had been overlooked.

She noted that for food and beverage, we have to wait until we know the date and an estimation of numbers. Katie Brossy and Judi Gaiashkibosh had referred to an A, B, and C tier based on cost. She concluded that the subcommittee will wait to see the budget.

The subcommittee discussed decorations and flowers and suggested Goldenrod and Sunflowers with native grasses and weeds. The subcommittee contemplated small cocktail tables, as opposed to sit-down tables, with a stack of three small Cather books from the Bison edition, University of Nebraska Press. A vase of inexpensive flowers and a stack of books can be used as decorations. Mike Zeleny is going to check with University of Nebraska Press, and believed that a stack of three on each table could be given away at the end of the reception.

Entertainment or music was discussed by the subcommittee and the subcommittee recommended a playlist appropriate to Cather or Nebraska. A running list of music that may be

appropriate were noted as, *O Pioneers!*, with composers such as Tyler White and Bob Bedell, Howard Hansen, and then ending with Nebraska Fight song.

For the photographer and videographer, Chairman Hull indicated he could contact NET to send a videographer and Mike Zeleny anticipated that the University of Nebraska would send one of their own photographers.

Regarding the medallions and coins, the subcommittee recommended that the likeness of Cather be on one side, with half of the coins having the state seal of Nebraska, since Trevor has already obtained permission from the Nebraska Secretary of State, and the other half with the seal of the University of Nebraska. With regard to University funding, the question was posed to Mike Zeleny regarding the Chancellor's preferences. Sara noted that Willa Cather is a University of Nebraska graduate, so it makes perfect sense. The subcommittee will meet in a week and a half to discuss this again.

Chairman Hull inquired regarding the cost of the two different back sides. After speaking with Judi Gaiashkibos, she noted that the more you order, the cheaper it is. Judi did not spend a lot on this, perhaps only for 1,000 coins to hand out to people and to each organization.

Sara also mentioned that if the University wants to have some to pass out later, then it makes sense that the UNL logo would go on the back of all of them, and would not prefer to pass out coins with the seal of the State of Nebraska.

Trevor pointed out that even though the coins are handed out at the reception, the coins are not specifically made for the reception. Trevor questioned using the UNL logo, since the Committee's obligation is to give these coins to the delegation and Senators. He noted that the handing out of coins is customary. Since this a state project, then it is important to use the great seal of the State of Nebraska. Ruth Haley Keene agreed that the state seal should be on the back of the coin. Ashley Olson questioned whether the Governor's Office would approve of this budgetary expense.

Chairman Hull agreed with Trevor that this is a good point and that we can do both the state seal and UNL logo. Sara Crook and Chairman Hull noted to reflect on the agreement in the record. Chairman Hull would like to move ahead with the Committee's distinctive obligations. Chairman Hull asked for any opinions, dissent or assent.

Chairman Hull requested a motion for the entire Committee to approve the Reception subcommittee's recommendations.

Motioned by Rod Bates, Seconded by Sara Crook.

Sara Crook also mentioned that she found a few corrections in her typed Minutes from the last subcommittee meeting and she will send an updated version.

Roll Call:

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

No: 0

Not Present: Ron Naugle

### **Dedication Ceremony Subcommittee:**

Chairman Hull stated the next report is from the Willa Cather Dedication Ceremony. Members are Tim Heller, Ashley Olson, Rod Bates and the Chairman.

The subcommittee discussed the congressional ceremony, but few decisions will be made by the subcommittee at this event. Katie Brossy had mentioned that the congressional office will handle the presenting of the colors and choose the color guard. Regarding the National Anthem, Chairman Hull recommended Lady Gaga from President Biden's inauguration. He remarked that artists are eager to be associated with educational and cultural institutions, and Chairman Hull has made a couple of calls to New York to request Lady Gaga's agent.

For the invocation, the subcommittee recommends Bishop Michael Curry, who is the presiding bishop of the National Episcopalian Church. It is important to note that Willa Cather's Church of choice was Episcopalian. Chairman Hull has his address and contact information. Ruth Haley Keene confirmed this is a good idea.

For the Unveiling of the Statute, the Committee can only choose two people. The subcommittee suggests that Laurie Smith Camp's daughter, Abby, should be asked. Ashley Olson suggested another member of the Willa Cather family, such as a niece or nephew.

As for the State Delegation, this includes Governor Pete Ricketts, U.S. Senator Deb Fischer and U.S. Congressman Jeff Fortenberry. The Committee will deliver a list to Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office for approval, and then, her Office will choose that category for the Committee. A representative from Red Cloud would be U.S. Congressman Adrian Smith.

The subcommittee recommended that, in lieu of music, we ask a representative to read from Willa Cather's works. Tim Heller provided a list of prominent actors. If everyone prefers Former First Lady Bush, then we need to move quickly. He observed that she was so effective in Red Cloud and that she reads beautifully. Chairman Hull indicated he would like to hear from everyone regarding this on how the Committee should proceed. Sara Crook asked that if the Former First Lady Laura Bush is agreeable and wants to come, would she then be doing a reading at the Dedication Ceremony and talk longer?

Chairman Hull mentioned she would not be at the Dedication Ceremony, because there is not enough time at the dedication. He reiterated that we only have one hour and the passage cannot be longer than three minutes. So, the Committee couldn't ask Former First Lady Laura Bush to do that.

Sara Crook clarified that it sounds as if she could do both. Chairman Hull agreed that we could ask the Former First Lady to do both.

Aaron Wyatt appreciated and enjoyed the subcommittee's discussion, as well as its direction and thoughts; however, he stated that we are potentially missing an opportunity to showcase Nebraska talent. Aaron commented that he is not opposed to the national figures, only that he is more interested in the opportunity to showcase Nebraska talent.

Chairman Hull stated that the list from Tim Heller is quite impressive, and there are good actors that could read the passages beautifully.

Rod Bates noted that the lay out originated from Judi Gaiashkibos and that the musical interlude wasn't necessarily required, and upon having this discussion, it was suggested we could read instead, which is a great idea. Rod stated that a reading is an ideal salute to Willa Cather.

Ruth Haley Keene mentioned that if one can get to the level of the national anthem, then this is a statement that is significant on music, and that she would go along with Rod's comments.

Trevor Jones stated he liked the reading idea and it makes sense.

Tim Heller suggested Randy Miesner of the Eagles from Scottsbluff, and whether or not he'd be interested in the National Anthem portion of it, in order to showcase Nebraska talent.

Sara Crook stated that she would prefer to see a representative singing from Nebraska.

Ruth Haley Keene explained that Chairman Hull was indicating the style of the song, and not as much as Lady Gaga singing, but, in other words, beyond what you hear in the baseball park. She agreed that we could have a representative from Nebraska, only that when you get people to start listening because of the arrangement, then it is significant.

Chairman Hull also noted it is significant due to the talent and drama, and star power. Nebraska can make a mark to have an individual with that caliber.

Sara Crook stated that if Former First Lady Laura Bush is going to come for a reading as entertainment, then that is the star power. She noted that the Former First Lady will be at both, the dedication and reception. If she does not accept, then it is possible to pursue Lady Gaga.

Chairman Hull noted that we have to look in advance to find out. He suggested that we write to Former First Lady Laura Bush first and get a reaction. He asked if that is satisfactory?

Sara Crook agreed. Chairman Hull asked for Ashley Olson's input.

Ashley commented on security protocols of the Former First Lady and to keep in mind that a reception is not conducive with proper security detail, and that her preference is likely to be for the Dedication Ceremony. However, presenting these options to the Former First Lady with regard to time limitations and circumstances is appropriate.

Ruth Haley Keene remarked that serious consideration ought to be given to women and leadership roles. Whoever reads for Willa Cather ought to be a woman in order to honor women.

Chairman Hull agreed.

#### **Invitation List Subcommittee:**

Chairman Hull remarked that Judi Gaiashkibos would not emphasize enough regarding the care for the invitation list. It is limited to 200. A question to ask is, how many Senators or Congressman will be there? Cross check, double check, but don't raise people's hopes. Build it slowly. At the last minute, they had so many people and there were bad feelings. Chairman Hull asked, how do we avoid that?

Aaron Wyatt stated that Ruth Haley Keene, Ashley Olson, and he met and decided on two tasks. The first was to reach out to Katie Brossy and get a confirmation on the number of invitations. The other task was to put together a doodle document starting with a list of names, dignitaries, and roles as a group

for potential inclusion in the invitation list. He mentioned the subcommittee had a long discussion of the different names and dignitaries. Aaron asked, how far do we extend invitations to state government dignitaries? He noted the Legislature and the Governor, and asked for input. Aaron stated that the subcommittee has not reached out to anyone, but the subcommittee does have a preliminary list.

Chairman Hull stated that getting the list together is a good idea. He mentioned that Ashley Olson has lots of memberships, and that HN and UNL (reception) will have invitations for the dedication and reception, however, it is all one and the same list. Chairman Hull mentioned that he appreciated what has been done already.

Rod Bates added that when we started the discussion, we could manage with 200 people based on Judi Gaiashkibos' word and the size. He noted that we invited every member of the Legislature with 49 Senators total, and we started doing it that way. However, we are not going to get all 49 members from the Legislature. Who needs to be invited? He stated that we are free to invite a lot of these people and not have to worry about 200. Not every member is going to drop things and come to Washington at their own expense.

Ruth Haley Keene asked for an assessment of the original pool (State, HN, UNL, Legislature). Sara Crook responded that this would be Tier 1 for the invitation list with an RSVP date. She stated, based on that number, you can then do Tier 2.

Rod Bates asked Ashley Olson to comment.

Ashley stated that they've done a great job summing up discussion, as well as inviting heads from cultural institutions, as in the Humanities Council in Nebraska, Cartwright as a cultural endowment, Chairs of NEH, NEA, NILES, public broadcasting, etc.

Sara Crook asked if all of these would be Plus 1 since no one prefers to travel alone.

Chairman Hull remarked this is a good point.

Ruth Haley Keene mentioned that you can invite one person and if the spouse or significant other asks, then it is okay to extend that invitation. Otherwise, assume one, initially.

#### **LB 42:**

Trevor Jones noted for the record that LB 42 is Hall of Fame business and is not part of the Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection's purview.

Tim Heller stated there is nothing more to discuss regarding this.

#### **Frequency of Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee and Subcommittee Meetings:**

Chairman Hull asked for thoughts on the frequency of the Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee meetings and subcommittee meetings.

Tim Heller inquired if we need these that frequently, since the subcommittees are handling a lot of this and meet often. Tim suggested every other month.

Sara Crook suggested every other month, as the subcommittees are working, and until the Committee has a date, a lot of hard decisions cannot be made. The earliest is Fall 2021.

Sara Crook asked about public relations and if we needed to issue any releases.

Tim Heller remarked that if the Committee does not have any hard dates, then it will be tough to pursue public relations promotions. Sara Crook confirmed that is a good point.

Ashley Olson noted that there were some email exchanges with Trevor's marketing team about press topics and some items may be drafted in relation to the finished statue.

Chairman Hull stated that we will rely on the active work of the subcommittees. Each of the chairs of the subcommittees will call meetings as they choose. In May, he noted, the Committee will meet again with input from the subcommittees in April.

Chairman Hull thanked Anne for her work with the group and stated that the Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee will meet every other month and that it is up to the three chairs of the subcommittees to call the meetings.

Motion to Adjourn.

Motioned by Tim Heller, Seconded by Rod Bates.

Roll Call:

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

No: 0

Not Present: Ron Naugle

Adjournment at 2:38 p.m. CST.