

July 20, 1981

Dear Jack:

The Commission of Fine Arts considered the conceptual designs for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at its meeting on July 7, 1981. After a thorough discussion with the sponsors, their architect and the professional advisor, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposed memorial. In the members opinion, the design has a simplicity and sense of dignity that befits an important memorial for this site and complements the character of the park.

The Commission recognizes that this is only a conceptual design, and that there are a number of questions such as access to handicapped visitors, the possibility of a ground-water problem, and the spacing and arrangement of the names, all of which must be studied in much greater detail during design development. We strongly recommend, however, that the essential simplicity of the current design be kept as the overriding guideline in developing solutions to these possible problems.

This is especially true in introducing any devices which may be thought necessary to alerting visitors to the drop-off occurring at the points where the walls recede beneath the existing grade. There should be no obtrusive visual elements above grade in order to announce the presence of the walls. This will bear very careful study by the designer, as well as close scrutiny by the Commission. We will be glad to consider any schemes that are developed during the course of more detailed design development.

As part of this process, we would like to suggest that the locations and dimensions of the walls be accurately located and staked out on the site. Prior to our meeting, the members of the Commission approximated the layout of the memorial on the site by pacing off the dimensions. We found this very helpful, but obviously it would have been better if the actual dimensions had been laid out accurately ahead of time. I should say at this point, that while the two-hundred foot dimensions proposed for the walls appeared to be appropriate, we would strongly question any

proposal that would exceed this dimension. There simply does not appear to be sufficient room on the site for anything larger.

With all best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

J. Carter Brown
Chairman

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CHA/ko/7-20-81