

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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THE PENSION BUILDING
441 F STREET, N.W., SUITE 312
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

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MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

24 September 1992

The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. in the Commission of Fine arts offices at the Pension Building, 441 F Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Members Present: Hon. J. Carter Brown, Chairman
Hon. Neil H. Porterfield, Vice-Chairman
Hon. Joan Abrahamson
Hon. Adele Chatfield-Taylor
Hon. Jeannine Smith Clark
Hon. George E. Hartman
Hon. Robert A. Peck

Staff Present: Mr. Charles H. Atherton, Secretary
Mr. Donald B. Myer, Assistant Secretary
Mrs. Sue A. Kohler
Mr. Jeffrey R. Carson

National Capital
Planning Commission
Staff Present: Mr. Patrick Tribe

I. ADMINISTRATION

A. Approval of the Minutes of the 23 July 1992 meeting.
The minutes were approved without objection.

B. Dates of next meeting. There was no objection to the dates of the next three meetings which were scheduled as:

29 October 1992
3 December 1992
21 January 1993

II. SUBMISSIONS AND REVIEWS

A. National Park Service, National Capital Region
CFA 24/Sept./92-1, Vietnam Women's Memorial. Final design
and material selection. (Previous: CFA 16/April/92-5.)
Staff member Sue Kohler reminded the members that the preliminary design received their approval nearly a year ago

along with a recommendation by the Commission to soften the pavement border. She then introduced Glenn DeMarr representing the Park Service. In succession, the presentation was turned over to Diane Carlson Evans, the chairman and founder of the Women in Vietnam Memorial Project, and finally George Dickie, the landscape architect.

In developing the design, Mr. Dickie used the Park Service recommendation of a minimum twelve foot radius for paving around the sculpture group and softened the outline of the granite pavement by reducing the "fingers" of the memorial terrace from six feet to two feet six inches on average. In addition, the main entrance was placed on axis with the sculpture group while the granite pavement was extended along the lateral entrance walkways. Mr. Dickie pointed out that a carnelian granite similar to that used for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial was proposed for both the pavement and curb as well as the sculpture base, but that a precise color range and finish was still under study.

Mr. Dickie then addressed landscape material, furniture and lighting. He showed how the planting scheme had been softened in accordance with Commission recommendation, that a bench similar to those used elsewhere on the Mall had been selected, and that four lighting fixtures would be mounted on bronze-colored poles set among the trees.

The Chairman commented that he was worried about using the same species of tree for both the memorial circle as well as the walkway approaches, stating that the contemplative and focused nature of the memorial would be dissipated with too liberal a use of the same tree. Limiting a specific tree type to the circle alone would help to ensure the poetic as well as spiritual focus of the sculpture. The lateral approaches would then be better defined in terms of softer materials. Several other members voiced their agreement, suggesting that the elimination of the rigid rows of trees along the pathway approaches would strengthen the feeling of coming upon a special place by way of a natural park-like setting. The Chairman further cautioned against any hint of urban character in Constitution Gardens.

Adele Chatfield-Taylor expressed concern over the proposed pole-mounted lights, stating that such a solution would appear commonplace and too urban. It was pointed out, however, that while the Hart sculpture was lighted by fixtures attached to mature trees, many years of growth would be required before the trees proposed for the current memorial were mature and tall enough to support such

fixtures. Ms. Chatfield-Taylor stated that she felt the fundamental problem common to this part of the Mall was the piecemeal approach to the lighting, paving and landscaping designs for the various memorials proposed. This concern was echoed by the Chairman, who again questioned the wisdom of extending the granite along the lateral paths. Ms. Chatfield-Taylor then produced a photograph showing an open lattice paving grid which permitted the growth of grass at the interstices. Mr. Dickie pointed out, however, that the high water table at this location would not permit such a scheme and had, in fact, dictated the tree selection: willow oak. In response to a question about the planting of these trees, he stated that the specimens for the memorial circle would be fourteen to fifteen feet tall, which prompted a suggestion that the added cost of planting taller trees might be defrayed if they helped to eliminate the need for light poles.

There was no further discussion, but the members agreed that there were still problems with some aspects of the design, particularly the hard-edged character in the natural setting of Constitution Gardens. The Park Service representative and the landscape architect said they would restudy the design in light of the comments made.

B. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) CFA 24/Sept./92-2, Replacement facility for Fire Engine Company No. 24 to be located at Georgia Avenue and Gallatin Street, N.W. Staff member Jeff Carson briefly described the project as replacing an existing firehouse with a larger one at a location farther north on Georgia Avenue (at New Hampshire Avenue). He then introduced the project manager for WMATA, John Dickson.

Mr. Dickson explained that the extension of the subway system Green Line would run diagonally under the current firehouse. He added that removal of the remaining commercial properties on the block would provide for commuter parking as well as a new bus facility. As a final point, Mr. Dickson stated that adjustments to the fire zone boundaries would change the demographics of the area serviced by Fire Engine Company No. 24, thereby requiring upgraded and enlarged facilities, criteria met by the current proposal. He then turned the presentation over to Mr. Corley from Harry Weese Associates, the firm responsible for developing the site plan and program. Mr. Corley first explained that the design was produced in collaboration with architect Amy Weinstein, who developed the elevations for the building, and then introduced Jose Silva, the project architect for Harry Weese Associates.