

## **Interim Activity of the Commission for Historical Statues in the U.S. Capitol**

---

Date of Report: June 17, 2022

Author: Department of Historic Resources

Enabling Authority: HB 1406, Chapter 1099 Virginia Acts of Assembly

**Executive Summary:** Pursuant to the powers and duties authorized under Chapter 1099 of the 2020 Virginia Acts of Assembly, The Virginia General Assembly created the Commission for Historical Statues in the United States Capitol and tasked it with studying the removal and replacement of the Robert E. Lee statue in the Capitol's National Statuary Hall Collection, where each state is entitled to have two statues. Virginia's other statue is of George Washington.

**Commission Members:** The commission consists of eight members. Governor Ralph Northam appointed Dr. Edward Ayres and Dr. Colita Fairfax. The Virginia Senate appointed Senator Louise Lucas, and the House of Delegates appointed Del. Jeion Ward. Three citizen members were elected at the Commission's first meeting: Dr. Fred Motley of Danville, Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe and a resident of Indian Neck, and Margaret "Margi" Vanderhaye of McLean. Julie Langan, Director of the Department of Historic Resources, serves as an *ex-officio* member.

**Summary of Commission Meetings:** All meetings have been publicly noticed as required by the *Code of Virginia* § 2.2-3707 and held virtually due to the State of Emergency declared by Governor Northam as authorized by and in compliance with § 4-0.01 of the 2020 Appropriations Act (HB 30, Chapter 1289) that was previously in effect. All meetings were recorded and minutes were prepared and posted to the Commission's webpage.

August 27, 2020: The agenda included a status report on Virginia's request to remove the Robert E. Lee Statue, discussion regarding the disposition of Robert E. Lee Statue following its removal from the Capitol, and approval of the first Interim Report to the General Assembly.

October 8, 2020: The agenda included a status report on Virginia's request to remove the Lee statue, public comment and discussion of the proposed timeline, budget and replacement process.

November 17, 2020: The meeting was devoted to a public hearing, the sole purpose of which was to hear from the citizens their suggestions on who should replace Robert E. Lee in the National Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol.

December 16, 2020: The agenda included an update regarding plans to remove the statue of Lee from the Capitol, its disposition following removal, an overview of the 83 nominations received, public comment, presentation of the five finalist subjects - Oliver W. Hill, Barbara Rose Johns, John Mercer Langston, Pocahontas, Maggie Lena Walker. Following discussion by the Commission, Barbara Rose Johns was approved.

March 3, 2021: The Commission held only one meeting in 2021 hosted virtually by the Department of Historic Resources (DHR), the agency tasked with providing administrative support to the Commission.

## **Milestones:**

---

A [webpage](#) was established for the Commission.

August 14, 2020: Commission requested that the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC) accept ownership of the Lee statue.

August 18, 2020: VMHC agreed to accept Lee statue.

Fall 2020: Through a variety of means, including press releases, social media and a public hearing, the public was invited to suggest who should be chosen as the subject of the replacement statue.

October 21, 2020: Governor Northam signed agreement with the Architect of the US Capitol regarding the removal of the Lee statue.

DHR procured the services of a contractor to remove the statue of Robert E. Lee from the Capitol and transport it to Richmond.

The Commission and the VMHC entered into a Memorandum of Agreement regarding the transfer of ownership of the Lee statue.

December 21, 2020: The statue of Robert E. Lee was removed from the Capitol.

December 22, 2020: The statue of Lee was delivered to the Virginia Museum of History & Culture in Richmond.

During the 2021 Regular Session, the General Assembly passed a joint resolution HJ525 approving the selection of Barbara Rose Johns as the subject of the replacement statue.

March 3, 2021 Commission meeting: The Commission received an overview of public comments received since its last meeting and also heard oral comments from the public. Members of the Barbara Johns Family were introduced and spoke briefly to the Commission. DHR Director Julie Langan provided an update regarding the approval process and budget for the statue as well as the state procurement process.

On March 31, 2021, Governor Ralph Northam sent a letter to the Architect of the Capitol requesting approval of the selection of Barbara Rose Johns

July 31, 2021: Architect of the Capitol sent letter to Governor Northam approving the selection of Barbara Rose Johns

DHR initiated state procurement process to procure the sculptor and statue by first issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to a national audience. Ten proposals were received, all of which were deemed qualified. Those ten sculptors were then invited to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) which was due in December 2021. Nine of the ten responded.

Senator Lucas, Chair of the Commission, appointed an evaluation committee to review the proposals. The committee consisted of: Julie Langan (DHR), Margaret Vanderhye (Commission member), Alexis Assam, Regenia A. Perry Assistant Curator of Global Contemporary Art (VMFA) and Madrika Martin (DHR Procurement Officer). The Evaluation Committee independently reviewed and scored each proposal using the following criteria:

- Details of Approach
- Visual Support Materials
- Recent Work/References
- Ability to Complete Project

The committee met on February 4, 2022 to discuss the process for reviewing proposals. The committee met on April 6, 2022 to review each proposal and compare scores. Two proposals were deemed the strongest and those sculptors were invited to submit maquettes of their proposed sculpture. Once the maquettes were delivered, DHR began efforts to schedule a meeting of the Commission. Because the schedules of members did not align, it was not possible to meet with a quorum present until July 21, 2022.

Because the Commission has not met since March 2021, this report has not yet been approved by its members. The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for July 21, 2022 at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture. The focus of this meeting will be presentations from the two sculptors who are finalists for the sculpture commission.