

COMMEMORATIONS AND MEMORIALS NAMING AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting held January 13, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 1105 over Zoom.

Attending were members of the committee:

Mr. Richard K. Hines V '66, Chair
CAD Parker Davis '21
Mr. Hugh M. Fain III '80
COL Keith Gibson '77
MAJ Catharine Ingersoll
Dr. Caroline Janney
Mr. Lester Johnson '95
Mr. Anthony Moore '78
COL Kim C. Parker
Mr. S. Waite Rawls III '70
Mr. Gene Scott '80

Also in attendance were:

Mr. John William Boland '73, VMI Board of Visitors
MG Cedric T. Wins '85, Interim Superintendent, VMI
BG Dallas B. Clark '99, Deputy Superintendent for Finance, Administration and Support, VMI
COL Sean P. Harrington '94, Office of the Superintendent, VMI
COL William Wyatt, Communications and Marketing, VMI
Ms. Cynthia Norwood, Office of the Attorney General of Virginia

Motion to move Public Comments to the End of the Agenda

The original agenda for the committee meeting allocated twenty minutes at the start for public comments; however, the large number of people who pre-registered to speak necessitated that this be moved to the end of the meeting since it would take longer than the allocated time. A motion to this effect was made by Mr. Fain and seconded by Mr. Rawls. The motion was approved unanimously.

Introduction and Opening Remarks

Mr. Hines called on the members in alphabetical order, asking each to introduce themselves briefly for the benefit of new attendees. Mr. Boland and MG Wins provided short comments on the committee's responsibilities, and Mr. Hines reiterated the importance of the work of the committee.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Hines called on the committee to approve the minutes of the meeting that took place November 17, 2020. Mr. Rawls so moved, and Mr. Fain seconded. The minutes were approved with no objections.

Presentation by Dr. Janney

Mr. Rawls introduced Dr. Caroline Janney of the University of Virginia, who shared her screen to give a presentation titled "When the Monuments Went Up." Dr. Janney talked about the social and political contexts in which monuments memorializing the Civil War were erected, observing that there has never been an agreement in this country on what the Civil War meant and how we should remember it. She also noted that monuments are always intended for the next generation as they serve to convey to posterity what a given group believes at that historical moment. She provided specific histories of the different waves of memorializing that took place in the sixty to seventy years after 1865, including both Southern and Northern commemorations in her discussion.

Mr. Rawls asked Dr. Janney questions that the committee had submitted, all concerning the work of sculptor Moses Ezekiel, VMI Class of 1866. She provided her thoughts on the statue of Thomas Jefferson on UVA's campus, on *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* at VMI, and the *Confederate Memorial* at Arlington National Cemetery. Mr. Waite thanked Dr. Janney for her presentation and her service on the committee, and Mr. Hines expressed his appreciation as well.

Reports on Committee Activities

Mr. Hines reminded the committee that its responsibility is not just looking backward, but also looking forward to analyze where VMI will want to go in the future, while at the same time ensuring that the memorials reflect the institute's commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging.

Mr. Hines then provided an overview of the committee's charter, noting that comments made at the November 17 meeting had been incorporated into the charter, and that with the committee's approval the current version would be passed along to the full board for a vote at its January 29 meeting. The committee voted to recommend that the VMI board approve adoption of the following committee charter:

"The Commemorations and Memorials Naming and Review Committee shall be responsible for oversight of all policies and practices related to the naming of buildings and places on Post as well as the existence of statues, commemorations and memorials on Post (buildings, places, statues, commemorations, and memorials hereinafter referred to collectively as "Memorials"). This oversight shall include, but shall not be limited to, all existing Memorials as well as all future Memorials. Notwithstanding the powers of the President of the Board enumerated in the preamble to this Section, it is anticipated that non-Board members of the Committee should include, among others that may be appointed, the head of the VMI Museum System, the principal government relations officer, a representative from the faculty, a representative from the corps of cadets, and a representative of the VMI Alumni Agencies. In exercising its oversight and providing recommendations to the full Board for approval, the Committee shall consider, among other things, VMI's mission of producing citizen-soldiers imbued with honor, civility, and respect and shall ensure that all Memorials properly reflect the Institute's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging."

Motion recommended to the Board of Visitors:

"It is moved that the VMI Board of Visitors approve and adopt the Commemorations and Memorials Naming and Review Committee charter, and that the Bylaws of the Board of Visitors be amended to add the charter as approved."

Mr. Hines moved to approve the recommended motion, and Mr. Fain seconded. The motion passed with no objections.

Also set to be presented to the full board at its January 29 meeting are the “Criteria for Review” document and the “Inventory” document, both of which had been prepared primarily by COL Gibson and his staff. Mr. Hines asked the committee to recognize that the current documents remain in a working state and are subject to continued review. Mr. Hines called on COL Gibson to describe the two documents and explain how the committee anticipates using them in analyzing various commemorations.

COL Gibson discussed the two documents, emphasizing that they were still essentially in draft form and that the committee is continuing to receive valuable input that will make these documents as strong as possible. COL Gibson narrated the processes and methodologies he and his staff used in developing them. He has discussed the project with colleagues at other institutions and at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and the solicitation of comments from alumni, cadets, faculty, staff, and the public have also helped to guide the process. Another resource that has proven to be extremely helpful has been the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent federal agency that advises Congress and the White House on commemorative issues and historic preservation policy. The ACHP’s 2018 paper, “Policy Statement on Controversial Commemorative Works,” was particularly key in articulating the principles that the committee has adopted for reviewing VMI monuments.

COL Gibson noted that the context of the imageries under review is an academic landscape, and that the guiding points in the criteria document recognize that one also receives an education through the physicality of place—particularly the buildings, statues, monuments, and grounds. COL Gibson also compared the inventory review to the frequent academic reviews of curricular offerings, in that there is a need to review that the objects on Post are currently meeting and will continue to meet the needs of cadets. There are two fundamental things that the committee needs to keep in mind: 1) the original intent, and 2) the context of what values and standards are reflected and how those compare to those required by society today. Every individual piece in the inventory document will be brought under review and assessment, and there are plans in place to continue to adjust the documents to reflect the thoughts and observations that are coming in to the committee.

Mr. Hines observed that with respect to the inventory document, the narratives found therein are exceedingly truncated and amount to somewhat of an “historical shorthand.” He noted that the committee fully understands the abbreviated nature of the entries on individual objects, and he called on constituents and members of the public to give the committee feedback if there is an issue of omission in the materials or if there is an observation that will help provide greater historical context to the objects.

COL Gibson reminded the committee that the documents are still in draft form, and Mr. Hines noted that any additional edits will be shared with the committee for review before the final versions are submitted to the board. Mr. Hines also asked MAJ Ingersoll to explain the phrases “visual imageries and semiotic modalities” found in the documents, and she provided a brief commentary on the terminology. Mr. Hines called for other comments or discussion from the committee. Mr. Fain thanked COL Gibson and MAJ Ingersoll for their work on the documents.

The committee voted to recommend that the VMI board approve adoption of the “Criteria for Review” document and the “Inventory” document.

Motions recommended to the Board of Visitors:

“It is moved that the VMI Board of Visitors approve the attached document [‘Criteria for Review’] outlining the criteria by which the VMI landscape is evaluated.”

“It is moved that the VMI Board of Visitors approve the Inventory and Review of Monuments and Memorials Related to Confederate Iconography document.”

Mr. Hines moved to approve the recommended motions, and Mr. Rawls seconded. The motions passed with no objections.

The documents will be presented to the full board on January 29 with the understanding that they will be subject to review and continued feedback from various stakeholders.

Reports on Constituent Input

Mr. Hines noted that these are three general categories of constituents whose input needs to be considered: alumni, current cadets, and faculty members.

Mr. Moore reported on behalf of the VMI Alumni Agencies. He noted that alumni opinions on the committee’s charge are wide-ranging and diverse, and therefore it is impossible to provide a single opinion that is representative for all alumni. He gave an overview of the alumni association’s activities in this regard, noting in particular that Mr. Thom Brashears ’95 instituted diversity conference calls to engage minority alumni over several classes to discuss racism; five such conference calls were held between June and December.

Mr. Moore also mentioned that the Alumni Agencies received many comments in the fall as a result of published Washington Post articles, the resignation of former Superintendent GEN J. H. Binford Peay III ’62, and the relocation of the statue of Thomas J. Jackson from Post to the Virginia Museum of the Civil War in New Market. The Alumni Agencies held twelve town hall calls, organized on a regional basis, in order to receive input from alumni around the country; the calls also were an opportunity to provide the alumni more details and more context on these events. Mr. Scott and Mr. Johnson spent a lot of time on those calls, and they directed alumni to particular links so they may continue to stay informed.

According to these conversations, Mr. Moore noted that most alumni are focused on how VMI’s unique education model can be preserved and how VMI can emerge stronger from this unique experience. Mr. Moore specifically thanked the Board of Visitors for including the alumni in their activities.

Mr. Hines thanked Mr. Moore before calling on CAD Parker Davis to report on the feedback he has received from the Corps of Cadets.

CAD Davis echoed Mr. Moore’s observation on alumni opinions: it is impossible to gauge a single, complete view, as some cadets want everything related to the Civil War to be removed, while some are reticent about how much VMI is going to change. He noted that the cadets he has talked to remarked upon how different “our world” must seem to those on the outside, and that it is difficult to understand the peculiarities of the Institute if you have not attended or worked at the school. CAD Davis noted that cadets are ready to be out of the spotlight, and they see the committee’s work as an opportunity to move forward to promote a wider range of alumni. He stated that “VMI cannot

be contained within an inanimate object,” and that no matter what changes the committee advances, it is not the physical things that define VMI. He did note that the Corps does not want the VMI “system,” i.e., the framework of the regimental system and the Honor Code, to be altered.

Mr. Hines then called on MAJ Ingersoll to report on her conversations with VMI faculty members. MAJ Ingersoll said that, for the most part, faculty members are enthusiastic about being solicited for input and have provided a range of opinions on the specific objects in the inventory. The faculty members she has spoken with have expressed their gratitude for the committee’s work and that they are being included in the conversation. The faculty’s primary focus is that Post be a welcoming and inclusive landscape that will ensure that VMI is able to recruit and retain both a diverse student body and a diverse faculty.

Mr. Hines agreed that “we don’t want the Institute to be defined by improper statues or memorials,” and reiterated his goal of retaining VMI’s sense of place and sense of history so long as they are proper and satisfy the criteria for review.

Report on Repositioning of Flagpoles

Mr. Hines opened the conversation about the flagpoles by noting that the spiritual center of the physical campus is barracks. The flags demarcate the “front” of barracks, and they used to be atop Washington Arch before being moved to the parade ground as a memorial to those who died in World War I. VMI made the decision several months ago to move the flagpoles to the centerpoint of the barracks complex, to flank the statue of GEN George C. Marshall, VMI Class of 1901, in front of Marshall Arch in New Barracks. Mr. Hines called on BG Clark to report on the status of the flagpole project.

BG Clark provided the committee with an overview of scope of the project. He shared sketches and schematics of the new landscape architecture, and provided the administration’s rationale behind the project. He noted that the flagpole effort was initiated under GEN Peay as his administration sought to refocus attention away from the nineteenth century history of VMI and towards the twentieth and twenty-first century history of VMI. Thus, the plan was developed to flank the statue of Marshall with the flagpoles and resituate them at the physical center of the three “wings” of barracks. He noted that as part of this refocusing, one of the considerations was to answer the question, if there were no flagpoles on the parade field today, where would we want them to be placed? BG Clark also explained the various design considerations for the stairs onto the parade ground, ramps for accessibility, the flagpoles themselves, and the symbolism of the landscaping and hardscaping materials.

Discussion ensued among the committee members. COL Gibson recognized the importance of that spot, as Marshall personally accepted the honor of the arch name. He also noted the improved connection between barracks and the parade ground that the design represents. Mr. Hines asked BG Clark when the project would be taking place, and BG Clark responded that he anticipates that it will be accomplished during the early part of the summer furlough, so as not to disrupt formations that take place during the academic year. The project should be completed by the start of the fall semester of 2021.

Public Comments

Mr. Hines opened the meeting to public comments. He reminded everyone giving comments that they would be limited to three minutes each. The committee heard comments from a number of alumni.

Committee Discussion

Mr. Hines asked if any of the committee members had any more topics to discuss; there being none, he thanked the committee.

Adjournment

Mr. Hines then proposed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Scott so moved, and Mr. Fain seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 1244.

Respectfully submitted,

MAJ Catharine Ingersoll