



**SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT
COMMISSION**

HISTORICAL MARKER RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: American Friends of Lafayette, John Trussell

FILE No.: 24-002613-HM

LOCATION: Johnson Square

DATE: June 6, 2024

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval of a freestanding historical marker located in Johnson Square. The purpose of the marker is to commemorate the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to Savannah from March 19-21, 1825.

The applicant provided staff with updated language for the marker. It will read:

ON MARCH 19, 1825, GENERAL
LAFAYETTE ARRIVED IN SAVANNAH.
ESCORTED HERE ON MARCH 21, HE
LAID THE CORNERSTONE FOR THE
NATHANAEL GREENE MONUMENT.

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art apply:

Evaluating Themes for Markers and Monuments. New markers and monuments commemorate and honor people, places, and/or events.

Proposed themes should fall into one or more of the following categories.

Arts and Humanities. Includes art, architecture, music, theater, literature, education, etc.

Science and Engineering. Includes technology, inventions, medical, communications, etc.

Civil and Institutional.

Social and Humanitarian.

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Industry and Commerce. Includes economics, agriculture, transportation, etc.

Politics and Government.

Military History. Includes people, places, or events.

Religious History. Includes people, places, or events.

Maritime History.

Colonial History.

Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.

Cultural and Ethnic History.

Education.

The proposed theme should have documented significant, clear and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County. The local focus should be the predominant theme of the monument.

The applicant did not include information on the themes that the marker relates to, but themes likely include politics and government, military history, colonial history, and local history.

The level of significance should be high enough to warrant a public presence.

This standard is met.

The person, place or event commemorated should not have been sufficiently commemorated elsewhere in the County. The theme should be distinct and original, and not be duplicated in other existing markers or monuments.

While referenced on other markers elsewhere in the city, there is no one marker that is directly related to the Marquis de Lafayette.

The theme should reflect a larger connection to the community as a whole, and not only to one distinct group.

This standard is met.

Commemorated events should have enduring historical significance and have occurred over fifty years ago.

Commemorated persons should have enduring historical significance and have been dead at least twenty-five years. Living persons should not be commemorated.

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There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place.

These standards are met.

Evaluating Sites for Markers, Monuments, or Public Art. *Certain factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating whether a site is the appropriate location for a marker, monument or public art [hereto referred to as “object” to indicate the inclusion of all three types]. These factors include:*

The installation of an object should not cause overcrowding of the site, if there are existing objects. Objects should be sited far enough away from other objects as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually.

The proposed marker will be placed about eight feet (8') from the Sons of the American Revolution bench and will be located between the bench and an existing light pole. While located between multiple objects, the marker's location will not overcrowd the site or lessen a person's appreciation of the SAR bench.

The proposed object should not damage or disturb existing established vegetation on the site including low tree limbs, or significant tree roots.

The marker will be placed in a location with a significant amount of low-lying plants. Its presence in this location, however, will not significantly impact major vegetation.

The proposed object should not require the removal or alteration of existing above or below ground utilities.

There are no above ground utilities in this area. The applicant will need to confirm that there are no below ground utilities present.

The proposed site should be large enough to accommodate an object, and should not encroach on other existing object sites, buildings, or designated green space.

This standard is met.

The proposed site should not be utilized for special events (such as sports, festivals, ceremonies, etc) on a regular basis which an object would disrupt.

The square is not commonly used for special events. This standard is met.

The proposed site should not be prone to frequent automobile accidents which could damage the proposed object.

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The marker will be located in a square and away from automobile traffic. This standard is met.

The proposed site should be easily accessible to pedestrians and the physically challenged (excluding marker sites).

The proposed site should be visible and accessible from a public right of way.

The marker will be located immediately beside a public sidewalk. This standard is met.

The proposed site should have adequate parking nearby (excluding marker sites).

This standard does not apply.

The proposed site should not have a high probability of significant archaeology unless an archaeological study is part of the proposal.

Given the relatively small size of the marker support, archaeology will likely not be distributed if it's present.

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

The marker is located in an area that is easy to maintain.

The installation of the object should enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

This standard is met.

The installation of the object should not require the alteration or removal of existing signage (traffic, street, etc).

No signage will need to be removed for the proposed marker.

The installation of the object should not significantly affect automobile traffic sight lines.

The marker will be located in a square, out of the way of any vehicular traffic.

The installation of the object should enhance the design of the overall site.

This standard is met.

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The installation of the object should not require the removal or alteration of existing sidewalks, unless it is part of a comprehensive redesign for the entire site (which is generally discouraged).

The installation of the marker will not require the alteration of the existing sidewalk.

If periodic memorial services are likely, the site should be able to accommodate them without causing undue disruption to the neighborhood, plantings, etc.

The marker is easily accessible for maintenance if necessary.

Site in Relation to Theme for Markers or Monuments. *The relationship between site and theme for a marker or monument is critical in determining the appropriate site for a particular theme.*

Marker. *A marker should be erected in as close proximity to the site to which it is related as possible and be clearly visible from a public right-of-way.*

Markers commemorating an event should be sited within 100 feet of the event site or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

Markers commemorating a person should be sited where that person was born, lived, died, or performed some act of enduring significance or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

A marker commemorating a place, such as a significant piece of architecture, should be located within 100 feet of the place or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

The marker will be placed within Johnson Square, the location of the Greene Monument. During his stay in Savannah, the Marquis de Lafayette helped to lay the cornerstones for both the Pulaski and Green Monuments. The location within the square is appropriate and meets the standards.

Design. *The design of a marker, monument, or public work of art should be of the highest quality and caliber, and enhance public space. In order to promote the high standards the City of Savannah has historically enjoyed in its markers, monuments, and public art, the following guidelines should be observed.*

Markers. *Markers may be mounted on a freestanding pole, wall-mounted, or embedded in the ground. As the primary purpose is to inform the public about an event, place or person, the aesthetic significance of a marker is generally minimal.*

Markers on a freestanding pole should be the standard Georgia Historical Society (GHS) Marker style: two-sided, cast aluminum with a 30" x 42" plate size. The shape should match the GHS marker shape. The marker should have

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a black background with white, silver or gold text. Temporary markers may be other shapes, sizes, and colors.

Markers not erected through the GHS's marker program shall not bear the GHS or state seal.

Except the marker title, the marker text should be not more than 1" in height, and not less than 1/2".

Marker text should be created in a manner that, to the extent possible, prevents fading and erosion.

Markers should be made of an enduring, non-corroding material.

Markers should be considered permanent and designed accordingly. Temporary markers may be considered provided they serve an educational function, are made of a material designed to last for the proposed life of the marker, and a plan for removal or replacement of the marker at the end of the temporary period is submitted.

The installation of a marker on building should not damage the historic fabric of the building.

The intent of the standards is met. While the marker is slightly smaller than allowed (2' x 3') and while the letters are larger than what is typically allowed (3" – top row, 2" – middle, and 1' – bottom), the marker is already created and is a part of the National Lafayette Trail. This is a national program with markers throughout the country that have a consistent design.

The marker will have a blue background, red trim, and white text. While not meeting the standards, this is part of a national program that utilizes a standard template for the design.

Funding.

Budget. *The Mayor and Aldermen do not fund new markers, monuments, or works of art. The applicant is fully responsible for funding the design, construction, installation, and any necessary landscaping, paving, or lighting involved with a new marker, monument, or work of art.*

According to the application, the marker is being provided by the Pomeroy Foundation and will match similar existing markers. No other information about funding was provided.

Escrow Payment. *All markers, monuments and public art erected on public property become the property of the Mayor and Aldermen. The Mayor and Aldermen assume responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of the marker, monument or artwork. Therefore, an initial Escrow Payment is required of the applicant subsequent to approval of the application. The Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, will determine the appropriate Escrow Payment and will notify the*

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applicant. The Escrow Payment must be paid prior to construction/installation of the monument or public art. Any marker, monument or artwork erected on private property is the responsibility of the property owner.

The applicant stated that they would pay the escrow and installation fees if required, though they hoped that the fees would be waived by City Council.

***Public Notice.** As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property.*

PUBLIC NOTICE:

As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. As of the writing of this report no comments were received from the public.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

For this project, the Commission had concerns about the color scheme, possible overcrowding within the square, and the lack of information on the proposed marker.

COMMISSION DECISION:

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommends denial to the Savannah City Council for install the freestanding historical marker located in Johnson Square, to be docketed on a City Council agenda because the proposed work does not meet the Master Plan and Guidelines.

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Catherine D. Kostilnik, Chair
Historic Site and Monument Commission

June 6, 2024
Date

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Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

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Jonathan Mellon, Director of Historic Preservation
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