



SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

NAMING RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: Patrick Rossiter
FILE No.: 24-003715-HM
LOCATION: Magnolia Park (corner of Bacon Park Drive and Morgan Street)
DATE: August 1, 2024

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to rename Magnolia Park (corner of Bacon Park Drive and Morgan Street) to Robert “Bobby” Sturgess Park.

FINDINGS:

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

Article E- Naming and Renaming of Public Property, Facilities and Streets.

General policy. As a general policy, the Mayor and Aldermen find that public property should be named after its principal function, location, or historical reference; however, significant community events, organizations or well-known persons with important contributions to the community, state or nation may deserve public recognition, which may occur by way of naming or renaming public rights-of-way or facilities.

Naming criteria and requirements.

Criteria. Naming or renaming of a public right-of-way or facility shall occur only when the proposed naming or renaming satisfied at least one of the following criteria:

It honors and commemorates a noteworthy person associated with the City of Savannah, Chatham County, the State of Georgia or the United States of America;

It commemorates local history, places, events or culture;

It will strengthen neighborhood identity; or

It recognizes native wildlife or natural geographical features.

The renaming meets the first and third criteria. Robert Sturgess was an important figure within the local community and was a well-known member of the neighborhood in which the park is located.

Exclusions. *The following shall not be considered for purposes of naming or renaming:*

Persons that resided in the City of Savannah for less than five years, other than prominent national figures;

Based on information provided, Robert Sturgess was a lifelong resident of Savannah.

Names assigned to existing public property within the City or unincorporated Chatham County where duplication of the name is likely to lead to confusion; and Except as set forth in Section 4-1106 of this Article, commercial names where usage of such name would amount to advertising.

The proposed park name is not a common park or street name and is not a duplicate of an existing site name. The park name will also likely not be duplicated in the future.

Considerations. *Naming requests shall consider:*

The number of residents and businesses directly affected;

Community diversity;

The applicant provided signatures of support for the renaming

The historical significance of preexisting name or location;

Staff was unable to find information as to why the park was name Magnolia Park, though it is possible that it is named after the neighborhood.

The appropriateness and compatibility of the request in relation to the existing area;

Based on the application, Robert Sturgess lived in the neighborhood.

The impact on emergency service delivery; and

The renaming won't impact emergency services.

Additional considerations for persons. *Requests to name a public right-of-way or facility in honor of a natural person should also consider the following:*

Absent extraordinary or extenuating circumstances, the proposed honoree shall be deceased;

The honoree passed away in 2021. This standard is met.

Whether the proposed namesake made a sustained contribution over an appreciable time period, exerted efforts of benefit or significance to local, state or national affairs and/or demonstrated leadership in governmental, cultural or historical affairs, humanitarian efforts, or community development;

Contributions that beneficially changed the nature and characteristics of the community; and

Achievement by a native Savannahian of national or international acclaim in a specific field of endeavor that has reflected positively on Savannah.

The honoree was a native Savannahian who had an impact on the local community. His family also operated the successful Hollan House Restaurant. While the honoree did not have a large sweeping impact at the local, state, or national levels, the honoree had an impact on those around him and on the local community.

Renaming of public property facilities or streets. All requests to rename public property shall be made in writing and directed to the attention of the City Manager. Such requests shall include:

In the instance of a park, playground, trail, recreational area or space;

A supporting petition signed by not less than 51 percent of all property owners abutting the subject property;

Based on the available information, the applicant received more than 51% support from neighbors immediately abutting the subject property. Additional signatures were also provided.

The present official name of the property;

The proposed new name;

The specific location of the property;

The name address and telephone number of the person requesting the name change;

A statement of reasons supporting the renaming request;

This information was provided in the application. The standard is met.

A thorough discussion regarding the history of the property, including all prior names associated therewith; and

The applicant provided a narrative as to why the park should be named after the proposed honoree. While no information was provided about the history of the park itself, staff conducted a cursory search into the history of the property to see if any information could be found. Minimal information could be located, and the information found provided minimal context for the park and its current name.

An endorsement by the current Mayor, an at-large alderman or the alderman representing the district in which the property is located.

A letter from the alderman was provided with the application.

Naming Dedication Ceremony. An applicant may request a dedication ceremony at the time application is made to the City manager. The City manager, or his designee, shall be responsible for scheduling such ceremony.

Donations and Gifts. A donation or gift of land, goods, funding, equipment or other items may constitute a basis upon which to name or rename public property. The donation or gift shall be documented and recorded by the Clerk of Council.

***Notification.** When the name of a street permanently has been changed pursuant to this Article, the public works administrator shall notify utility companies and interested state and local agencies of the street name change. Notifications may encompass more than one renaming event and may be provided by publication in a newspaper of general circulation.*

***Discontinuance.** The City retains the right to reject, discontinue or abandon any naming that occurred pursuant to this Article when deemed in the best interests of the health, safety and welfare of its residents and visitors.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the application to rename Magnolia Park (corner of Bacon Park Drive and Morgan Street) to Robert “Bobby” Sturgess Park as requested because the project meets the standards within *Article E- Naming and Renaming of Public Property, Facilities and Streets*.

MW : JM : KM