

University of Florida Historic St. Augustine, Inc. (UFHSA)

A direct support organization to UF as provided, Chapter 267.1736 Laws of Florida

UFHSA Board of Directors Meeting

March 16, 2018

Time Convened: 10:02 a.m.

Time Adjourned: 12:09 p.m.

Government House, 48 King Street, St. Augustine, FL

Board Members Present: Chair Allen Lastinger, Kathy Deagan, Bill Proctor, Herschel Shepard, Tracy Upchurch and Doug Wiles

Board Members Dial In: Rick Gonzalez, Roy Hunt, and Arva Parks

Board Members Absent: Don Slesnick and Michael Francis and William Robinson

Others Present: Ed Poppell, Jane Adams, Linda Dixon, Lora Smith and Billy Triay

The special Board Meeting of UFHSA was called to order by Chair, Allen Lastinger. The Chair asks that members of the board and panel introduce themselves. He then asked the first guest speaker to come forward.

1st Speaker: Dr. James Cusick, University of Florida

Dr. Cusick reviewed history of public monument. Biography of Loring. The city of St. Augustine wanted his body moved from NY to St. Augustine. This happened in March of 1888. A ceremony took place in St. Augustine when the body returned. A Nun wanted the body moved from cemetery to where the monument is located. It took many decades for this to happen. On July 7, 1920 the body was removed from the cemetery to where the monument would be placed. There are 2 issues the board needs to be made aware of: There is a question of ownership of the land where the monument is located and there are only newspaper records on who owns it. The cremated remains are under the statue. The treatment of graves/grave makers is an issue. The broader question is what does the monument represent and does it belong in downtown St. Augustine.

Questions: UFHSA Board Member, Doug Wiles asked if Dr. Cusick could characterize Loring's service to the Egyptian army and the civil war. Dr. Cusick replied that Loring was known as the boy soldier. In 1846 he was commissioned as a Captain for the Oregon Trail. He was called to Mexico and fought there where he was injured and lost one of his arms. UFHSA Board Member Kathy Deagan asked where the source of documents are that can verify everything about Loring. Ed Poppell replied that there is a deed between the Secretary of Treasury and the State of Florida.

2nd Speaker: Dr. Timothy Johnson, Flagler University

Dr. Johnson is in favor of removing and transferring the monument. He would like it moved to another location. He does not think it should not remain in the public square due to the confederate flag on it, but feels the remains of Loring should stay with a marker. The confederate flag arises deep emotions, even in the North. The confederate flag holds different meanings for everyone. Is General Loring's life important to today's youth? He fought Indians, Mexicans and participated in many other battles. He asked if Loring is an inspiration to today's youth. He does not believe the confederate banner is something that people should stand behind.

3rd Speaker: Rev. Lee, Dr. Floyd Phillips

Dr. Phillips stated that now is the time we must take seriously the times that we live. What message do we wish to proclaim to the world? The people visit St. Augustine to learn about the history they did not learn in school. He feels the symbolism of the statue is non acceptance of African Americans in the community. The Loring Memorial no longer represents who we are, a modern city with momentum. The conflicts Loring was involved in were with minorities. Dr. Phillips recommends the statue be removed.

4th Speaker: Rev. Ronald Rawls

Rev. Rawls asks how important historical accuracy is. He is concerned that statue will be like an open wound reminding everyone of the past and believes in order to truly heal the statue should be removed. He stated that white supremacists are using the confederate flag as symbols for their groups. Rev. Rawls asked that UF provide just leadership and noted that many cities have removed confederate statues.

5th Speaker: Nancy Shaver, Mayor of St. Augustine

Mayor Shaver discussed the journey of the decision made, even before Charlottesville. Reached out to Rev. Rawls to research the statues in St. Aug. After Charlottesville this issue took on a significance. Many people did not know recognize the monument or know where it was located. She deliberately talked to African Americans to ask how they felt about the monument. The opinions were not about hate, but hurt. At the time of the civil war, St. Aug. was involved for 8 months. The names of the African Americans who died fighting need to be memorialized. We will continue to expand the telling of our story. She ended letting the group know that many of the issues that Floyd Phillips are currently being addressed.

Chair Lastinger thanked all of the speakers and presenters and then moved to the public comment portion. He notified the speakers that there would be a 3 minute limit for comments and they would be given a 1 minute warning.

1. Jill Pacetti: Notified the board that she got 11,000 signatures in favor of keeping the statue. UF does not have the decision making power to decide to remove or keep the statue.

2. Seber Newsome: Stated that the city does not own the monument, the state does. In a poll he noted that 87% of people want to keep the memorials. He said the family does not want the statue or the remains removed. He feels Rev. Rawls tries to intimidate people. The memorial has nothing to do with lost causes. Please keep the monument.
3. Michael Gold: Notes that the State of Florida owns the Loring Monument. He said the speaker before him touched on what he wanted to say.
4. Melinda Rakoncay: States she wanted to talk about the flags on the monument. Noticed that the flag missing is the one for the state of Florida. She is concerned because the confederate flag has been used by some hate groups, but you can't do anything about that.
5. Doug Russo: Stated the act of slavery has not been abolished, goes on to quote the constitution. It should be used as a punishment. What does Moses say about slavery? He then quoted a bible verse. God instituted slavery with the Hebrews. Quoted old and new testament. Ended stating that the Bible supports slavery and the south was on the right side.
6. Judith Seraphun: Would like to get the history of Loring straight. In 1884 Loring wrote a book about serving in Egypt. He moved to Florida when he returned from Egypt. From Florida he moved to NY. Noted that Loring had a lot of loyalties to a lot of people and he should not have a statue here.
7. Dennis Liphardt: State that General Loring was a traitor. He said when Loring joined the confederate army he became a traitor. Asked why people are fighting about this.
8. Mary Cobb: Read a letter that she previously sent to the board. Stated that history can never be erased. She said that Robert E. Lee warned about statutes commemorating the war. She is afraid it would keep wounds open.
9. Lance Thate: Informed the group that he was the chairman of the St. Aug. Tea Party. He is concerned the board spent little time promoting the event today. Does not think Rev. Rawls should be here because he thinks he is a black supremacist and the board is not progressive.
10. Peter Royal: Notified the board that he is a resident in St. Augustine and a member of the Tea Party in St. Augustine. He feels the universities could care less what the people have to say. State that there should have been an initiative on the ballot.
11. Ken McClain: Stated he was born and raised in St. Augustine. Asked how many people attending were born and raised here. He has experienced racism here all of his life. You all (the board) come from other parts of the country. You didn't experience it. Stated that there are no black faces representing things here.
12. Ed Slavin: Asked the board what they thought Abraham Lincoln say about this? Suggest keeping the monument, but change the name of Loring Park. You don't want to erase history. Environmental racism is a big thing.
13. David Heimbold: States that he and his wife moved here from up north. Notes that St. Aug has a rich history and should continue to use that as momentum.
14. Richard Lapre: States that the monument has bothered people in St. Augustine for a long time. He even spray painted the monument one time. Notes that the monument is a problem for people in town and will continue to be a problem. Asked that they remove the monument.

15. Dan Holiday: Notifies the group that several years ago his coffee shop was closed due to him serving a black person. He has been in business here just shy of 60 years and loves this town.
16. Sonia Pickney: (nurse who helped the lady) directed her comment to Mayor Shaver. She said it was hard to take Mayor Shaver serious when she post things like #bigboss on Facebook. Feels things need to change.
17. Rita Pellicer Zimmerle: Unable to join the public comments forum.

Chair Lastinger thanked the board members and the community. He let them know that this would be discussed at the next UFHSA board meeting. Chair Lastinger adjourned the meeting.

Adopted