

NEW HAVEN HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Wednesday, February 9, 2022, Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM

Location: Web-based meeting via Zoom

**Chair Trina Learned calls to order the public hearing at 7:02.**

**In attendance:** Justin Elicker (Mayor), William Long (Deputy Director of Zoning), Maya Vardi (City Plan, Staff to the Historic District Commission, Planner II), Michael Piscitelli (Economic Development Administrator), Johnathan Ward (Corporation Counsel), Trina Learned (Commissioner and Chair), Susan Godshall (Commissioner), Dylan Christopher (Commissioner), Doug Royalty (Commissioner), Tom Kimberly (Commissioner), Karen Jenkins (Commissioner), Alex Eginton (New Haven Preservation Trust)

**1. Commissioner Learned reviews New Haven's Zoom meeting HDC policies and procedures and the point of New Haven's Local Historic Districts and the Historic District Commission.**

**2. Continued Public Hearing**

**2.1 21-07-CA Wooster Square Park (MBLU:208-0550-00100), Wooster Square Local Historic District. Owner: City of New Haven, Applicant: W. G. Iovanne- Wooster Square Monument Committee. Seeking approval for the installation of a new monument upon the existing pedestal at the southernly end of Wooster Square Park.**

*Note: To reduce confusion, the recorder uses the word "base" consistently to describe the entire stone structure upon which the sculpture will be placed although many terms were used during the meeting including foundation/base/plinth/pedestal/monument.*

***Bill Iovanne Jr., 61 Pasture Lane, Branford***

Mr. Iovanne introduces himself as co-chair of the Wooster Square Monument Committee and the people on the Committee who will be presenting. He thanks the Commission again for allowing the opportunity to present a revised proposal for a monument to honor the contributions of Italian American heritage in New Haven. He explains that the Committee has modified the design from the original proposal presented at the December after meeting

with the New Haven Preservation Trust and gathering comments from a neighborhood survey in January. He presents five points for approval that are changes from the original proposal: reduction of overall footprint, removal of upper part of base, repurposing removed stone around base, use of LED lighting for sculpture, and removal of the fence. Originally the footprint proposed was 42' x 42' and that was revised down to 17' 4" on north/south sides and 16' 8" on east/west sides. The Committee shows the rendering of the design. They explain the request to remove the 6' of stones at the top of the base down to the white granite slab, leaving the height at 4'. They will use the stone around the base and plant annuals, perennials, shrubs within. The rectilinear footprint will measure 6' x 8' x 4'. A new title plate of cast bronze with engraving of "Indicando la via al futuro" will be installed over the Columbus inscribed dates "1492 Christopher Columbus 1892" currently in the stonework and another plaque on north side will have the inscription "Pointing the way to the future". Another plaque to acknowledge the artist, donors and the City will be cast bronze or aluminum and attached to existing base or in Russo Park as part of future project. The sculpture at its highest point is 6' 9", with a total height of 10' 9" on the base. The exact depth of the support base will be determined by the foundry when they attach the sculpture to it and will be an oval shape measuring 4' x 6' to depict a ship. Or it can be modified to a rectangular shape to create more harmonious design with the surrounding linear park. LED lights will be installed pointing up to sculpture but will not be intrusive to the public. The Committee also proposes to remove the non-historic fence around the sculpture as it will be important to provide an unobstructed view. The existing paths will not be altered. Mr. Iovanne explains that maintenance will be minimal as the plantings will be supplied by the city and the upkeep will be taken on by residents. He explains that the Committee believes that since the features are not part of the original design of the park, their proposal maintains the integrity of the original monument by reusing all of the materials in the new design which honors the original builders of the base. By lowering the height of the base, the proposed design is still consistent with the Secretary of Interior Standards which states that "rehabilitation projects allow for a new design, provided that design is compatible with the historic character of the area and maintains important visible relationships." In this instance, the pedestals historic relevance relates to its position at the terminus of Brewery Street. This position remains visually identifiable and fixed in its current place. He adds that the

Standards also say, “reconstruction may be used as a treatment when a contemporary depiction is required to understand and interpret a properties’ historic value, including the recreation of missing components.” In this instance, the proposed depiction of a family immigrated to the United States is consistent with original 19th century design intent, together with a more contemporary approach that reduces monumentality in favor of a more human scale of design. He explains that as to the guidelines for cultural landscapes, they recognize that change and continuity is a balance for all cultural resources and this design strikes that balance by maintaining the geographic footprint of the monument itself. In terms of geographical context, the design reflects the characteristics of the surrounding area, with no disturbance to the landscape. The use as a representation of the immigrant experience is consistent over time. Perhaps most important is the interpretation and opportunity to convey the historic experience at eye level. The design will allow for a more connected experience for first time and regular visitors to the park.

Commissioner Christopher says he is in support of the efforts of the Committee. He is interested in the material choices and how they will wear over time and asks about what the sculpture is made of. Mr. Iovanne replies that the sculpture will be bronze, and plaques will be cast bronze or aluminum depending on the cost.

***Justin Elicker, 821 Orange Street, New Haven, Mayor***

Mayor Elicker conveys the City’s support for the sculpture proposal. He commends the Committee on their flexibility to address concerns to complete their goal while honoring interest from others. He says the review and favorable vote is vital to keep the process moving. He also says he appreciates the Commission’s input that led to the changes in landscape design. And, consistent with the secretary's guidance for cultural landscapes recognizing the fence is not likely very helpful. Also, by lowering the pedestal to be at eye level it is very much in keeping with the contemporary way of seeing memorials from the perspective of cultural equity. He thanks the Commission again for their time and attention.

Chair Learned asks about the current base and its relationship with the white granite stone. Mr. Iovanne shows the current pedestal and where the white granite is currently. Chair

Learned clarifies the decreased height brings the base down to granite level. She also asks about the LED lighting creating nocturnal light pollution. Mr. Iovanne shows a rendering where four low intensity lights highlight features only on the sculpture itself. Chair Learned asks about the stones around the base's border and if they are mortared into place and if they are irregular like field stone. Mr. Iovanne says they are irregular shaped, and they will be set into ground and mortared as a foundation. Chair Learned asks if the design is skateboard proof. Mr. Iovanne replies that there is no place to skateboard due to grass all around and he does not see it as a concern for the sculpture. Chair Learned asks for Commissioner questions.

Commissioner Godshall asks about weatherproofing as currently the topmost stone is a monolithic piece without seams and the stones under it are not as the white granite is in two or four parts. She asks if the Committee considered water infiltration as a concern. Mr. Iovanne replies they considered water infiltration because the base is worn. There is a material they will be applied to both the sculpture and stone to prevent water infiltration and for easy graffiti cleanup. Commissioner Godshall reminds the Committee that surface protectants are not necessarily long lived and is concerned that it may still absorb water. Mr. Iovanne replies that water infiltration is also a natural thing that can happen, and the base will weather over time.

Commissioner Royalty asks about the border stones being mortared or anchored in place. Mr. Iovanne replies they would be trenched and mortared. Commissioner Royalty asks if they did the reconnaissance to make sure they have the stones needed in the right size to create the border. Mr. Iovanne replied that he recently took exact measurements and found out that the pedestal is not hollow and there are more stones inside. Commissioner Royalty asks about the decision for the orientation of the sculpture as Columbus looked toward Chapel Street (the public way). Mr. Iovanne explains they would consider the sculpture facing either direction. Commissioner Godshall explains that Columbus faced Brewery Street where the water was historically and that turning it would be symbolic of immigrant arrival as it would face the harbor. Mr. Iovanne says the Committee is amendable to having the sculpture face either Brewery Street or into the park. Commissioner Royalty asks if the Committee has

thought about people trying to climb on it. Mr. Iovanne feels people should be able to be in touch with public art, not necessarily climb on it. They think the lowered height will allow enough of a view and plantings might also discourage people from climbing.

Commissioner Christopher asks about lighting as there currently is none so power would have to be run to the location. Mr. Iovanne replies there were two flood lights that lit the Columbus statue so there is power there. Chair Learned opens it up to public comments.

***Rosa DeLauro, 227 Church Street, New Haven, Congresswoman***

Congresswoman DeLauro says she was born and raised in the Wooster Square community and served on the Wooster Square Monument Committee. She thanks the Commission for their work and explains that she helped designate Wooster Square as a district. She also thanks the Committee for their time and energy. She explains that there was a lot of debate amongst the Committee as to what would be the best representation of Italian heritage and the role the sculpture plays in weaving together the fabric of the Wooster Square community. She talks about the history of the Columbus statue, made for the 400th anniversary of his voyage. The decision to remove the statue with difficult but she believes it was the right decision and that it is the right decision to replace it with a new statue that recognizes Italian immigrants and America's rich immigrant history. She commends the Committee for the inclusive work with community feedback. She thinks the design honors the contributions of Italian Americans, their heritage in our city, and her personal relatives. She feels that being able to see faces on the sculpture tells a story. She reiterates the five changes in the design and the community input that went into those changes and expresses her hope for the Commission's support and approval to be able to move forward.

***Alex Eginton, 26 Anderson Avenue, West Haven (New Haven Preservation Trust)***

Mr. Eginton submitted written testimony but reads the letter into the record.

***Rosa Ferraro-Santana, Alder, Board 13***

Alder Ferraro-Santana submitted two letters of written testimony in support of the proposal. One is signed by several Alders and another is from Senator Martin Looney and Representative Alphonse Paolillo. She reads the letters into the record.

***John Lindner, 273 Greene Street, New Haven***

Mr. Lindner expresses great appreciation for Committee's hard work and listening to community. He talks about the DeLauro Family Table at the other end of Wooster Park and that he always sees people looking at and having picnics on it. He adds that he would like to see the statue looking into park and not away as driving by on Chapel Street would only allow a quick glance with the visual barrier from trees. He feels that it would allow more engagement standing on the lawn if it were looking inward to the park.

***John Destefano, 150 Judwin Avenue, New Haven***

Mr. Destefano says that he is struck by work over the past twenty years that has been framed by circumstances and decisions made by people long ago. This work is rooted in and among the City's rich past and points to aspiration of New Haven. He adds that while Congresswoman DeLauro sees the faces of her relatives, he also sees the faces of Afghans who come to city now in the proposed sculpture.

***Anstress Farwell, 37 Wooster Place, New Haven***

Ms. Farwell says she is glad to see the changes made from the last presentation. She asks for clarification about the plaque materials because plaques that have been made to look like bronze could be stolen and thin aluminum would not be appropriate. She asks if the stanchions are still part of the proposal. She talks about the base, which she says is sandstone not brownstone, and that the mortar has not been replaced so it is in good condition for having so little maintenance over time. She feels that the base needs to stay with the Columbus statue as its own work of art. She thinks it is better for new sculpture to start on new base with lights embedded in it instead of sitting on top. She does not like splitting up the base and creating the border. As to the direction the sculpture should face, she thinks facing into the park is okay as its symbolizing people coming to New Haven to stay.

Mr. Iovanne replies with a rendering of what the sculpture would look like if the base remained its full height, at the request of the New Haven Preservation Trust.

***Marc Massaro, 483 East Main Street, Branford (Artist and Project Designer)***

Mr. Massaro further explains that the sculpture weighs about 1,400-1,800 pounds. The top of pyramidal base, which is 4' square, has visible cracks in the mortar and stone. If the proposal is approved to put the heavy monument on the top of the pyramid base, it would need to be partially or fully disassembled and rebuilt to be structurally sound. Aesthetically, the point of lowering is to make monument more relatable. He thinks that seeing the underside of the platform and stepping back to see sculpture defeats the purpose of the Committee's work.

***Rebecca Bombero, 122 West Rock Avenue, New Haven***

Ms. Bombero submitted written testimony from Parks Commission Chair David Belowsky but reads the letter into the record.

***Alex Werrell, 26 Academy Street, New Haven***

Mr. Werrell thanks the Committee for engaging the neighborhood and for the changes they made increasing green space. He says he was disheartened to hear the Mayor express for the Commission to approve the proposal because other commissions are waiting. He has concerns about the statue but was happy to see the New Haven Preservation Trust recommendations and guidelines. He thinks that the stones being reused around the base goes against the guidelines and that the orientation of the statue and the base are important to preserve with or without the statue present. He thinks that since the base was built first and is considered historical, it should be preserved, and the new statue should fit that, perhaps shrinking it down. He does not think there is an issue with monuments and being at eyeline height. He also expresses his view that it is a fundamental fallacy that the Italian American experience is linked with legacy of Columbus. He feels it makes it difficult for neighbors to oppose statues without emotional responses from others as he thinks one can be opposed to a proposed statue without being opposed to history. He hopes that the focus is kept on the actual historical guidelines that the statue should meet and not emotions.

***Anna Festa, 117 Canner Street, New Haven, Alder, Board 10***

Alder Festa is a part of the Committee and represents the Church of St. Michael in Wooster Square that helped the Italian community establish themselves. She says that New Haven County has the highest number of Italian Americans at 21.2% in the northeast and that the statue represents the accomplishments of Italian Americans and how they paved the way for other immigrants. She gives examples of accomplished Italian Americans, and discrimination that still happened against them in the 1970s. She adds that the community was affected by taking down the Columbus statue.

***Alex Eginton, 26 Anderson Avenue, West Haven (New Haven Preservation Trust)***

Mr. Eginton reiterates the Secretary of the Interior Standards about new additions or alterations not destroying original materials and spatial relationships that characterize the property along with differentiating new from old and staying compatible with historic materials, size, and scale.

No further public comments. Chair Learned reiterates the five changes made in response to the original proposal: maintain footprint along the fence line, removal of upper part of base down to the granite layer, repurposing excess stone around base, use of LED directional lighting for the sculpture, and removal of the fence. She asks for clarification of three points: orientation of statue, plaque material, and if sign stanchions are still in the proposal. Mr. Iovanne clarifies that the stanchions are not part of proposal. The plaques are cast aluminum, not a thin plated piece of aluminum and can be colored to look like bronze. They would prefer if the statue faced inward to the park.

Commissioner Kimberly asks about dimensions of plaques. Mr. Iovanne replies that is difficult to know without approval of the base but his estimate is 12" high by about 18-24" wide. They each may differ in width. Commissioner Godshall asks for clarification about how the plaques would affect the Columbus engraving. Mr. Massaro replies that the plaque would be installed over the engraving measuring about 5' long and 8" high meaning it would extend beyond the engraving numbers, drilled, and bolted into granite so that title would not



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be destroyed. It could also be removed, if necessary, in the future. Mr. Iovanne clarifies each plaque would be that length, not what he previously said. Chair Learned says that because the application is not complete and does not contain fundamental information and dimensions, the Commission must make presumptions to make a determination. She asks for Commissioner discussion.

Commissioner Godshall makes three points: the stonework is the monument and should be called that; the reused stones around bottom make it look like monument collapsed; and she is unhappy with the rendering done for the New Haven Preservation Trust that makes the monument look silly hanging off the top of the pyramidal base when the base could be taken down until the 4'x 6' measurement to fit the sculpture. Commissioner Royalty suggests a way to move forward is to go through the five points and turn them into proposal language. Chair Learned agrees and asks for general agreement on points amongst Commissioners. She asks if the Commissioners generally agree with the fence removal and LED directional lights. Commissioner Kimberly replies that there are no light dimensions or manufacturer and that it would be better if they had a lower profile. Chair Learned says she concurs and that this point could be subject to a final approval once a design is submitted. She asks the Commission about the proposed orientation of sculpture as she agrees with Ms. Farwell about the symbolism. Commissioner Godshall agrees because Columbus was facing the water at the time, but since it is no longer there, she thinks agreement could be reached on that. Chair Learned says the plaque material and thickness of plaques with specs could be submitted to the Commission for clarification and final approval. Commissioner Kimberly says the third line of the text on the plaque is hard to read. Commissioner Godshall asks if the bolts could not go into the lettering. Mr. Massaro clarified that he told the foundry that none of the engraving be impacted so the bolts will go through the plaque corners. Chair Learned clarifies that the Commission needs more detail about this as well. She asks the Commission to address the reduction in height of the base and repurposing of the stone. Commissioner Godshall clarifies the guidelines from the New Haven Preservation Trust talk about all or most of the height, but not an ultimatum to keep all or nothing above the granite. The base was carefully constructed and that should be considered. Commissioner Royalty thanks the New Haven Preservation Trust for submitting a memo on the Standards. He suggests

considering them to think about base. He thinks the monument attained historic significance even though it was not an original feature of the park. When the monument was removed, only the base remained, which he does not believe is the monument. He thinks the question is about if what is remaining retains historic integrity to convey significance that it had when it had a monument and was a historic feature of the park. He is not convinced it does. However, he thinks it is a gorgeous piece of stonework and made with high quality materials and workmanship and it would be sad to see the stones turned into something else. He thinks that as a beautiful piece of history, the best way to preserve it is by moving it and putting in a new base. Commissioner Kimberly suggests a compromise; instead of disassembled and used as border, the stones are numbered and go with the statue. Commissioner Royalty agrees and understands the desire to lower the base to eye level. Chair Learned says that the Commission should be mindful of not redesigning something but reacting to the appropriateness of the design presented. Commissioner Royalty says if the Commission considers the base to have enough significance on site. Chair Learned says the Commission should keep in mind that any materials that are removed from the site are likely to be removed forever as there is no clear destination for them or a stewardship plan for those materials, so she is not comfortable recommending that.

Commissioner Godshall reiterates the point of lowering the base but keeping the pyramidal shape and stonework and comparing the new sculpture's weight with Columbus. She thinks that bringing down the height 2-3 courses is enough to keep observer connection while allowing the statue to fit and not hang over the edge. Chair Learned replies that it is hard to speculate without specific drawings, but she appreciates the beauty of the design in bringing it down to granite. Commissioner Christopher says that he is having trouble speculating about changes to the proposal. He thinks that looking at different proposals is disingenuous because it is not what the New Haven Preservation Trust has evaluated. Commissioner Royalty adds that he thinks if the park was surveyed today, someone trying to determine contributing features would not consider the base by itself without a sculpture to be a contributing feature. He attributes it to a historic house cut in half. So, he does not think it violates the Standards to do the proposed work. He also thinks the orientation of the sculpture might be better as oriented toward Russo Park, so it is not turned from the public way.

Commissioner Godshall replies that it would not be a half of a resource anymore because it would have a sculpture back on it.

Chair Learned summarizes the updates to this proposal (orientation, plaques, lighting, fence removal, no stanchions, and sculpture design with some final details submitted to the Commission before installation) but adds that the questions remain about what the sculpture sits on and if any stone is reused if it comes off the base.

**Chair Learned makes a motion to approve the design as shown with the fence removed, the existing base brought down to height of the granite course, the sculpture installed on top of the granite facing the park, the stones from upper part of the plinth repurposed to border a small planting bed on all four sides of the plinth at the footprint as currently defined with the fence. Further details on associated site improvements like four corner-located modest LED uplights, two plaques on the Chapel St side, written in English and the park side, written in Italian, plantings, and the installation of the base stone border will be provided to the Commission at a later date for its approval..**

**Commissioner Kimberly seconds the motion.**

Discussion: Commissioner Royalty asks if the motion includes approving the reuse of the stones as a border. Chair Learned confirms but the stone border is currently not articulated so Commission should look at more details about that.

**Commissioners Learned, Kimberly, Royalty, Christopher, Jenkins in favor;**

**Commissioner Godshall opposed.**

**Motion passes at 10:26.**

### **3. Discussion**

**3.1 90 Day Demolition Delay Applications- Detached garage at 172 Fountain Street (MBLU: 406 1133 01700). Expiration date: 03.01.2022**

Commissioner Godshall says this demolition was discussed at a New Haven Preservation Trust meeting. Mr. Eginton photographed the garage and comparable structures, and the Trust feels strongly it would be a good carriage house apartment since it is in good condition. She recommends sending a letter to the owner considering rehabilitation since it is part of a house in a State Register District. Chair Learned asked if the Trust has written a letter. Commissioner Godshall replies they have been trying to get it in the press instead, but they could write a letter. Commissioner Kimberly asks if there is an option for them to donate it for rehab elsewhere. Commissioner Godshall says the owner could, but they must be willing to do that. Commissioner Royalty agrees that the structure looks like it is in good condition. Chair Learned says that she and Ms. Vardi can work on a letter. Ms. Vardi also confirms the garage is listed in the Historic Resources Inventory.

**3.2 Section 106- Proposed Wireless Communication Facility Modification- 575 Whitney Avenue (MBLU: 215 0482 00100)**

Commission reviewed the invitation to comment via email and decided not to comment.

**4. Minutes**

**4.1 Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes- 10/13/2021**

**Commissioner Godshall makes a motion to accept the minutes with minor edits.**

**Commissioner Royalty seconds.**

**All in favor.**

**Motion passes at 10:46.**

**4.2 Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes- 11/10/2021**

**Chair Learned makes a motion to accept the minutes with minor edits.**

**Commissioner Godshall seconds.**

**All in favor.**

**Motion passes at 10:49.**

**4.3 Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes- 12/08/2021**

**Chair Learned makes a motion to accept the minutes with minor edits.**

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**Commissioner Kimberly seconds.**

**All in favor.**

**Motion passes at 10:57.**

**5. New Business**

**Commissioner Jenkins makes a motion to adjourn.**

**Commissioner Kimberly seconds.**

**All in favor.**

**Motion passes at 10:59.**

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Sorensen, recorder.

DRAFT