

U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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25 May 2017

Dear Mr. Vogel:

In its meeting of 18 May, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a new concept design for the National World War I Memorial proposed for Pershing Park, located on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW. The Commission approved the concept proposal and provided the following comments for the development of the design.

The Commission members thanked the project team for its responsiveness to their previous comments; they endorsed the proposed overall approach to rehabilitate the historic park enhanced with new commemorative elements. They also expressed appreciation for the presentation by the sculptor on the artistic conception and narrative content of the proposed bas-relief, the new central commemorative feature of the design, and they gave their support for the concept design as presented. However, they emphasized the fundamental importance of the design's experiential character—including the visual, auditory, and tactile qualities of water—in making this park work successfully as a memorial. As the design is developed, they also encouraged the design team to reconsider the potential of the kiosk site to serve as a further opportunity for commemoration, in addition to the existing Pershing statue and the new bas-relief, in reciprocal relationships that could increase the memorial's commemorative richness.

The Commission members expressed regret that the landscape architect, who will necessarily serve as the coordinating designer for this complex project, was not present. They found that the presentation lacked sufficient documentation about elements other than the sculpture, making it difficult to assess the overall experience, and they requested more detailed documentation for the next review. This documentation should include sections through the central pool with more specific information on the pool's depth and edge conditions, on the relationship of the water to the bas-relief wall and the path, and on how the water is featured in conditions of cascading, flowing, or standing. For the proposed bas-relief wall, they advised further study to determine whether its length is appropriate, and they requested more information about the treatment of the top and rear of this wall, as well as the design of the stairs at its sides. They recommended preparing a physical model to study and develop the design details and relationships among the existing and proposed elements.

The Commission looks forward to the further review of the design for this memorial. As always, the staff is available to assist you with the next presentation.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Robert Vogel, Regional Director
National Park Service, National Capital Region
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cc: Edwin L. Fountain, U.S. World War I Centennial Commission
Sabin Howard, Sabin Howard Sculptures
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