

**Women of Virginia,
Commemorative Commission
November 21, 2011**

Minutes

Members in attendance:

Secretary Lisa M. Hicks-Thomas
Senator Mary Margaret Whipple
Senator Jill Holtzman Vogel
Mrs. Em Bowles Locker Alsop
Mrs. Mary Blanton Easterly
Jacqueline Cook Hedblom
Mrs. Mary Abel-Smith
Kitty Claiborne

Delegate Jimmie Massie
Susan Schaar
Lissy Bryan
Sandra G. Treadway
Rita McClenny
James E. Wootton
Alice Lynch

The meeting was called to order by Secretary Hicks-Thomas. Commission members introduced themselves. Minutes of the last meeting on September 6, 2011 were adopted. Secretary Hicks-Thomas then introduced Mr. Christopher Ohrstrom, Chairman of the World Monuments Fund.

Mr. Ohrstrom spoke about his work restoring neglected monuments, and stated the importance of maintaining relevance. He also said it is important for people to be engaged by monuments, which can be done by creating a “public use area.” He suggested the monument should be timeless and adaptable to new technology, and advised the commission to keep an open mind in regard to new ideas. Mr. Ohrstrom ended by stating that he was eager to assist with fundraising for the monument.

A member of the commission asked for an example of “timeless” monuments. Mr. Ohrstrom gave the Vietnam Monument as an example. Ms. Alsop asked Mr. Ohrstrom for his advice about using interactive content with the monument, and he cautioned the commission to be flexible with the technology, so that it might not become dated.

Secretary Hicks-Thomas thanked Susan Scharr and Paul Nardo for their help in putting together the statewide community conversations and thanked the staff and members of the commission who attended. She then introduced Linda Fisher Thornton, who facilitated the community conversations.

Ms. Thornton gave a summary of her 29-page report, as well as highlighted the 14 themes that emerged from the community conversations. The themes and symbols are as following:

1. Comprehensive, diverse, and inclusive
2. Elegant, uncluttered, and connected
3. Engaging, welcoming, and approachable
4. Thought-provoking and inspiring
5. Authentically representing Virginia women and their unique qualities
6. Balancing nurture and achievement
7. Representing change over time and generations and into the future
8. Representing nature and the cycle of life and hope
9. Interactive, connected, and updateable using today/tomorrow’s technology
10. Something different, but also consistent with Capitol Square tradition
11. Something sustainable, with a diversity of textures and tones
12. Something more than a monument, a process that unites/teaches state’s history
13. Reflecting current vetted and well-shared history
14. Portraying that we’re not done yet in honoring the women of Virginia

Symbols that were frequently mentioned were: circles, connecting hands, tree, upward, garden, path, benches, moving water, time, timelines, generations, into the future, infinity, light, reflection, table, voices, quilt, and stairs.

Ms. Thornton listed women who the public would like to see honored by the monument. She spoke about a possible national or statewide competition to select a design team and artist, and said that the public emphasized an enthusiasm for incorporating Virginia's history with the monument in an interactive way, which would involve Virginia schools.

Ms. Alsop spoke about the importance of informing Virginians about the accomplishments of many Virginia women who have largely gone unknown (mentioned Pulitzer recipients and Laureates).

Mrs. Scharr mentioned the commission's website, specifically in regards to pictures and progress reports, and that it would be accessible soon.

Nancy Cohen and her students from St. Catherine's School spoke to the commission and shared their ideas for the monument.

Alice Lynch reported that the finance subcommittee had not met, but that the members were working to establish contacts and bring in funds, as well as making up a list of foundations and individuals who may be potential donors.

Dr. Treadway suggested allowing the public to post comments on the website about which of the themes they most prefer, and said the Library of Virginia could notify the public of this effort through their newsletter.

Secretary Hicks-Thomas asked the commission if further public outreach should be pursued. She suggested the commission meet with groups, as opposed to hosting community forums. Del. Massey and Mr. Wootton urged the Commission to invite women's organizations and historical societies to visit the website, as well as publish the link in their own publications.

The commission unanimously voted in favor of moving forward with issuing the RFP. The Commission also agreed to create a subcommittee to handle the RFP. Mr. Ohrstrom advised the commission to seek advice from someone experienced with RFPs, and to decide whether a prize should be awarded. Secretary Hicks-Thomas suggested using the 14 themes in the facilitator's report to judge possible submissions.

The floor was opened for public comment. Judy Hart, former Superintendent of the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historic Park, implored the commission to emphasize a human-to-human connection when designing the "interactive" aspect of the monument. Ellen Brown, former director of the Radford Heritage Foundation and Glencoe Museum and descendant of Mary Draper Ingles, suggested the commission reach out to students and small museums for ideas about the monument.

The next meeting of the Commission is set for Monday, January 23, 2012 @ 2:00 p.m. at the Library of Virginia.

Secretary Hicks-Thomas said the report to the General Assembly was due December 1, 2011 and asked the RFP Consultant Subcommittee to meet prior to the next meeting and present recommendations to the commission at the next meeting.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned.