



DeKalb County Government

Manuel J. Maloof Center
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Agenda Item

File ID: 2019-3283

Substitute

Public Hearing: YES ☐ NO ☒

Department: Board of Commissioners

SUBJECT:

Commission District(s): All Districts

A Resolution to Adopt a Contextualization Statement for the Confederate Monument

Information Contact: Commissioners Gannon and Rader

Phone Number: 404 371 6353

PURPOSE:

The Board of Commissioners has previously adopted a resolution to move the Confederate monument from the Courthouse Square and a resolution authorizing contextualization. While it remains the adopted policy to move the Confederate monument, the County has been unable to find a suitable location. In the interim of relocating the monument, the attached resolution authorizes a contextualization statement of the monument.

NEED/IMPACT:

To authorize the attached narrative statement and to allocate the necessary funding.

FISCAL IMPACT:

\$3,000

RECOMMENDATION:

To approve the resolution and authorize the chief executive officer to execute all necessary documents.....

**A RESOLUTION BY THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA
TO CONTEXTUALIZE THE CONFEDERATE MONUMENT ON THE DECATUR
SQUARE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Whereas, a Confederate monument is located on the Decatur square adjacent to the former DeKalb County Courthouse that now houses the DeKalb County History Center;

Whereas, by adopted Resolutions 2017-1443 and 2017-1108 the Governing Authority of DeKalb County established policy governing the disposition of the Confederate Monument, and

Whereas, the monument remains at its original location because the Official Code of Georgia Sec 50-3-1(b) prohibits local governments from dismantling, destroying or concealing military related public monuments;

Whereas, DeKalb County government has actively sought opportunities to relocate the monument to museums, parks, and cemeteries and found no suitable place or willing third party to assume ownership and maintenance;

Whereas, historical records indicate that the monument was erected in 1908 with funds raised by the Agnes Lee Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy and directed by the A. Evans Camp of Confederate Veterans;

Whereas, the Confederate monument celebrates and glorifies the soldiers of the Confederacy, but makes no mention of the violence, cruelty and inhumanity of slavery – the fundamental basis for the war;

Whereas, historical records indicate that there are two distinct periods when Confederate monuments were erected in the United States. The first was from 1900 to 1920 and the second was during the civil rights era of the 1950's and 1960's. The construction and dedication of the Confederate Monument on the DeKalb Court House grounds coincided with the imposition of "Jim Crow" laws that legislated the disenfranchisement and subjugation of African Americans throughout the former slave states;

Whereas, the monument is located in a prominent place within DeKalb County and the City of Decatur and its inscription promotes a false historical narrative that is not only misleading, but offensive to the majority of DeKalb citizens whose ancestors' historical narrative and political rights were targeted, minimized, and erased by the Jim Crow laws and the Lost Cause mythology;

Whereas, a group of local historians who were tasked by Resolution of the DeKalb Board of Commissioners to study the Confederate Monument and to provide objective, interpretive context on has recommended language to contextualize the monument. The historians provided three examples of contextualization that were specifically written for the monument and that has been combined into the attached narrative.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF DEKALB COUNTY THAT:

1. The Governing Authority of DeKalb County affirms its policy of support for removal of the Confederate Monument from its current location, and for a change in State legislation that currently restricts and denies local governments the authority to do so, and
2. The Governing Authority finds that in the interim of finding a new location for the monument that the best course of action is to provide historical context to the monument that reflects the time period and circumstances under which the monument was established. Furthermore, when the monument is moved it shall continue to have this contextualization.
3. The Governing Authority shall work with the City of Decatur and the DeKalb History Center to determine the final design and placement of the marker and the Governing Authority shall appropriate \$3,000 in the 2019 budget for the preparation and installation of the permanent marker next to the monument that provides contextualization as written in the attached narrative.
4. If and when the monument is relocated , the contextualization marker shall be moved with the monument to any future location

ADOPTED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this ____ day of _____, 2019.

JEFF RADER

Presiding Officer

Board of Commissioners

DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this ____ day of _____,
2019.

MICHAEL L. THURMOND

Chief Executive Officer

DeKalb County, Georgia

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

BARBARA SANDERS-NORWOOD, CCC

Clerk

VIVIANE H. ERNSTES

County Attorney

Contextualization for the Confederate Monument on the Decatur Square

In 1908, this monument was erected at the DeKalb County Courthouse to glorify the “lost cause” of the Confederacy and the Confederate soldiers who fought for it. It was privately funded by the A. Evans Camp of Confederate Veterans and the Agnes Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Located in a prominent public space, its presence bolstered white supremacy and faulty history, suggesting that the cause for the Civil War rested on southern Honor and States Rights rhetoric—instead of its real catalyst—American slavery. This monument and similar ones also were created to intimidate African Americans and limit their full participation in social and political life of their communities. It fostered a culture of segregation by implying that public spaces and public memory belonged to Whites. Since State law prohibited local governments from removing Confederate statues, DeKalb County contextualized this monument in 2019. DeKalb County officials and citizens believe that public history can be of service when it challenges us to broaden our sense of boundaries and includes community discussions of the victories and shortcomings of our shared histories.



DeKalb County Government

Manual J. Maloof Center
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Agenda Item

File #: 2017-1108
File Status: Action

10/24/2017

Public Hearing: YES ☐ NO ☒

Department: Board of Commissioners

SUBJECT:

Commission District(s): All Commission Districts

Resolution to Remove or Relocate the Confederate Monument on the Decatur Square

Information Contact: Mereda Davis-Johnson, Commissioner District 5

Phone Number: 404-371-4210

PURPOSE:

This resolution sets forth some of the current issues related to the Confederate Monument on the Decatur Square and expresses an intent to remove or relocate it at an appropriate time, once all the relevant information has been gathered from a variety of sources. This resolution further directs the Executive Assistant and the County Attorney to perform further due diligence and to provide the Governing Authority with legally valid options for the removal or relocation of this Monument.

There is some question as to ownership of the land and the Monument and staff is directed to try and resolve the various outstanding questions in the next thirty days.

NEED/IMPACT:

This item protects the public safety and welfare of the citizens of the County.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Not known at this time.

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the attached Resolution and authorize the Chief Executive Officer to execute all necessary documents.

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION BY THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, TO REMOVE OR RELOCATE THE CONFEDERATE MONUMENT ON THE DECATUR SQUARE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Whereas, a confederate monument is located on the Decatur Square adjacent to the rear of the DeKalb County History Center, formerly the DeKalb County courthouse ("Confederate Monument");

Whereas, historical documents reflect that the Confederate Monument was erected in 1908 and its construction was directed by the A. Evans Camp of Confederate Veterans and Agnes Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy;

Whereas, at the time of its enactment in 1908, African Americans were prohibited from exercising the same first amendment and other constitutional rights as bestowed upon white Americans;

Whereas, the Confederate Monument contains an inscription which glorifies and praises soldiers of the confederacy, in part, because such soldiers "were of a covenant keeping race";

Whereas, primary sources contemporary to the Civil War as well as events and laws of Jim Crow era provide evidence and context that refute the claims embodied in the inscription, and

Whereas, it is unclear if the Confederate Monument located is in fact publicly owned by DeKalb County;

Whereas, thus far no minutes of the County commission have been located which formally accepts the donation of the Confederate Monument;

Whereas, state law, O.C.G.A. 50-3-1 contains various regulations related to a publicly-owned Confederate monument; and

Whereas, the Confederate Monument has recently been vandalized on at least two occasions, and has been the focus of much debate and various rallies;

Whereas, the Confederate Monument could easily become a rallying and flash point for violence as occurred in August of 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia; thus, creating a public safety concern for the City of Decatur and DeKalb County;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Governing Authority as follows:

1. The Governing Authority finds that the Confederate Monument may very well be owned by DeKalb County, but ownership is not definitively shown by a recent title report;
2. The Governing Authority finds that the Clerk to the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Commissioners have diligently searched and have been unable to locate any County minutes showing formal acceptance of the Confederate monument in the early 1900's;
3. The Governing Authority finds that the Confederate Monument received media attention after its erection and historical documents reflect that the Confederate Monument was erected, and its construction was directed by the A. Evans Camp of Confederate Veterans and Agnes Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy;
4. The Governing Authority finds that at this point in time, it is not clear that the Confederate Monument is publicly owned;
5. The Governing Authority directs the Executive Assistant and the County Attorney to (1) obtain a survey of the property which should allow the title attorney to determine ownership of the land where the Confederate Monument sits and (2) continue to research the records to determine if the Confederate Monument was in fact accepted by the County in any sort of formal way;
6. The Governing Authority directs the County Attorney to determine, legally, if the Confederate Monument can be removed and to provide the Governing Authority with an analysis of the legal alternatives available to the County, including removal to a location appropriate for such an artifact, relocation or other alternatives within thirty days;
7. The Governing Authority directs the Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners to empanel a committee of historians to provide objective interpretative context for the monument, using primary source documents within 30 days, and
8. The Governing Authority directs the Executive Assistant to determine an appropriate location(s) for the Confederate Monument;
9. The Governing Authority plans to lobby for the full repeal of O.C.G.A. 50-13-1 by the Georgia General Assembly during the 2018 session and shall include such repeal as a priority in its legislative agenda for 2018.

ADOPTED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this 24 day of October, 2017.


KATHIE GANNON
Presiding Officer
Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County, Georgia

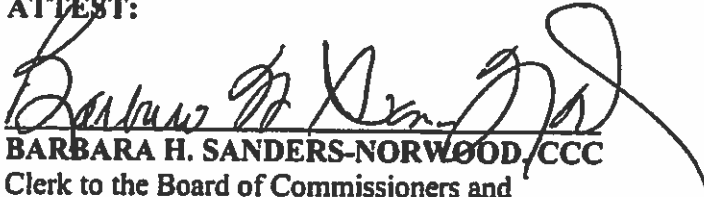
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October, APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this 25 day of 2017.



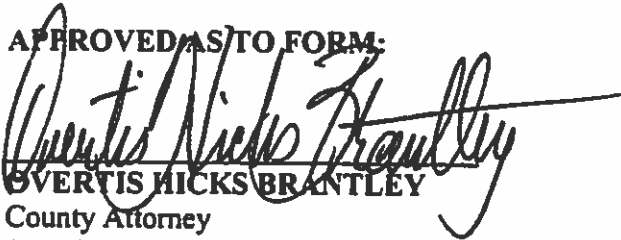
MICHAEL L. THURMOND
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

ATTEST:



BARBARA H. SANDERS-NORWOOD, CCC
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners and
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



OVERTIS HICKS BRANTLEY
County Attorney
DeKalb County, Georgia