

STONE MOUNTAIN MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION
November 17, 2015

A meeting of the Stone Mountain Memorial Association was held at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 17, at Commons Golf Club and Restaurant, Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, Georgia.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Carolyn Meadows, Chairman
Greer Johnson, Vice Chairman
Dick Childers
Roy Roberts
Scott Johnson
Joan Thomas
Ray S. Smith, III
Perry Tindol

ASSOCIATION MEMBERS ABSENT

Becky Kelley, Director of State Parks & Historic Sites

OTHERS PRESENT

Bill Stephens, C.E.O.
Bob Cowhig, Director of Planning and Development
Sonny Horton, Vice President of Marketing, Silver Dollar City/Stone Mountain Park
Edna Zimmerman, Director of Finance
Debbie Blihovde, Benefits Administrator
Chief Chuck Kelley, Director of Public Safety
Duane Studdard, Administration Manager
Mike Lee, Assistant Chief of Police & Fire
Naomi Thompson, Education Supervisor
Michael Thurmond, Former Georgia Labor Commissioner
Ed Williams, Chairman, Concerned Citizens for Effective Government
Lee Kenworthy
Members of the press

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Meadows, SMMA Chairman, called the meeting to order and stated that a quorum was present. Ms Meadows welcomed the visitors to the Board Meeting.

Mr. Smith made a motion to remove item 7 from the Agenda. The item was "Consideration of Lease Amendment 9". The motion was seconded by Ms. Thompson, and unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Johnson, and unanimously approved to waive the reading of the minutes of the September 15, 2015 Board meeting and to adopt the minutes as printed. A draft copy of the minutes was sent to each Board Member prior to the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Michael Thurmond the former Georgia Labor Commissioner addressed the Board. Mr. Thurmond said he was a neighbor to the Park. He lives in Smoke Rise. Mr. Thurmond stated he visits the Park at least once a month. He said he was at the board meeting in support of the idea to develop an Exhibit to honor and recognize the contributions of African American Civil War Soldiers. Mr. Thurmond said he was a historian and had written two books on the history of Georgia. Mr. Thurmond also served as Superintendent of the Dekalb County schools and thought the additions of this exhibit would be an excellent tool for educators to use as a field trip. Also to get a more wholistic and complete view of the struggle that redefined freedom in this country. Mr. Thurmond felt that the exhibit would add to the broad and rich history that was at the park.

Mr. Lee Kenworthy addressed the Board. Mr. Kenworthy lives at Park Springs which is joined to the Park Property. He said he did not represent Park Springs; he was speaking on behalf of himself. He was concerned about the noise from a bell being placed on the top of Stone Mountain. He said he had to deal with the sound of the golf carts and the maintenance equipment, the fireworks, the train, etc. He is requesting that the Board not put a large bell on top of the mountain which would create a loud and constant noise. He was concerned about noise pollution.

Mr. Ed Williams addressed the Board. Mr. Williams thanked the board for allowing him the opportunity to express his opinion. He was in support of the freedom bell on top of Stone Mountain. Mr. Williams stated the bell would represent peace, justice, love and freedom. He stated that the Confederates did not win the Civil War and no bodies were buried at Stone Mountain for it to be considered a Memorial. Mr. Williams stated that there were no major battles fought at Stone Mountain and none of the figures in the carving were from Georgia. He said that the property of Stone Mountain used to belong to the Creek Indians and did not understand why the Confederates were opposed to the bell on top of Stone Mountain. He believes that a bell should go on top of the mountain. He also said that he believes the bell and the carving can coexist. He said that peace, justice, love and freedom should trump oppression.

SILVER DOLLAR CITY/STONE MOUNTAIN PARK REPORT

Mr. Horton said they were full speed ahead with Christmas and Snow Mountain. Snow Mountain will open this weekend. Stone Mountain Christmas opened two weekends ago. Snow and Christmas will run concurrently until the end of December then Snow Mountain will continue until the end of February. They have a new show for Christmas called the littlest Christmas tree. It has a cast of 4 characters and 14 puppets that sing and dance. The Snow Angel has a new costume that lights up when she flies and is dramatic.

FINANCE REPORT – YEAR-TO-DATE

Ms. Zimmerman reported that the Finance Committee met earlier and discussed the financial statements through October 31, 2015. Total revenue year-to-date was \$9.2 million compared to a budget of \$8.7 million. Total operating expenses were about \$6.0 million compared to the budget of \$6.6 million. After depreciation the net income year-to-date is a loss of \$1.8 million compared to a budgeted loss of \$2.9 million.

CONSIDERATION OF EXHIBIT TO HONOR AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

Ms. Meadows asked Mr. Stephens to speak concerning this issue. Mr. Stephens said the request was simple. As Mr. Thurmond stated over 200,000 African American men served as soldiers in the Civil War for both the north and the south. Mr. Stephens said he was asking the board for permission to proceed with the exploration and evaluation of this exhibit. The intent would be to come back to the board once the scope, content, design and location of the exhibit are determined for final approval. Mr. Johnson made a motion to allow SMMA to proceed and explore and evaluate this exhibit and then present it back to the board for final approval. Mr. Smith seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Chief Kelley said the Park had a very nice weekend. It was the first weekend in sometime without any rain. On Saturday the fourth Confederate Flag Rally came to the Park. They said 467 people would be attending and about 50 were actually at the rally. They gave some speeches in the Yellow Daisy parking lot then climbed to the top of Stone Mountain. They stayed on top a couple of hours then walked back down and left. Ms. Meadows told Mr. Kelley that on behalf of the Board she wanted to thank him and his staff for the good job they do protecting the visitors who come to the Park.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Carolyn Meadows, Chairman

Submitted by Debbie Blihovde