



Bull Run Civil War Round Table

P.O. Box 2147
Centreville, Virginia 20120

September 9, 2020

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035

Bull Run Civil War Round Table Testimony/Statement

Public Hearing to Consider the Potential Removal, Relocation, Contextualization, or Covering of Any or All of the Publicly Owned Civil War Related Monuments or Memorials Located at the Fairfax County Judicial Complex - September 15, 2020

I am submitting this testimony/statement on behalf of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table (BRCWRT), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose purpose and focus is the study and understanding of Civil War history, and preserving and enhancing public understanding of that history. BRCWRT is headquartered in Centreville, Virginia and has 364 members, of whom more than half are Fairfax County residents.

1. With respect to the publicly owned *Civil War Related Monuments or Memorials Located at the Fairfax County Judicial Complex*, BRCWRT submits the following testimony/statements:

A. The Marr granite obelisk was installed on June 1, 1904. It commemorates an event, the death of the first soldier killed in action (in battle) in the Civil War, and is located on the very ground where that event occurred. Having been shot and killed in a skirmish with the 2d U.S. Cavalry at Fairfax Courthouse in the pre-dawn hours of June 1, 1861, Captain John Quincy Marr's body was discovered later that morning in the Stevenson farm clover field adjacent to the Fairfax Courthouse lot.

The plaque on the granite obelisk contains the inscription, "*This stone marks the scene of the opening conflict of the war of 1861 – 1865, when John Q. Marr, Capt of the Warrenton Rifles who was the first soldier killed in action, fell 800 feet S.46 W (mag.) of this spot, June 1, 1861.*" The historical significance of this event is that John Quincy Marr was the first of the more than 200,000 American soldiers who would be killed in battle during the Civil War. The Marr granite obelisk is not a monument to, or a monument glorifying, either John Marr or the Confederacy, Nor is it an affirmation of "white supremacy".

Contrary to unsubstantiated statements contained in the petition to *Remove, relocate and replace the Confederate monument at Fairfax County Courthouse* initiated by *RestonStrong* the obelisk is not a Confederate monument that glorifies John Marr, nor does the obelisk promote the Confederacy or the *Lost Cause* narrative. Additionally, although John Marr was one of Fauquier County's delegates to the Virginia session convention, he was called home to *attend a family affliction and was not present* for the convention delegates vote on the ordinance of secession. Moreover, *RestonStrong* does not represent or speak for the *residents of Fairfax County*.

BRCWRT Position: The Marr granite obelisk should remain in its current location – on the ground where the historic event it commemorates occurred. Any Fairfax County consideration of an action or resolution to do otherwise should be fully and clearly communicated to County residents as part of an open and transparent public process to consider such action(s) and/or resolution(s), and to receive public comment and input on the same.



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B. The “*Virginia Department of Historic Resources memorial in the form of a marker*” is in fact Virginia Highway Historical Marker B-262, “First Confederate Officer Killed”, that was installed on June 1, 2009. As with all Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) historical markers, the text for marker B-262 went through an extensive vetting and accuracy review process prior to approval, production and installation. Virginia Highway Historical Marker B-262 is not a monument to the Confederacy, nor is it an affirmation of “white supremacy”.

BRCWRT Position: Virginia Highway Historical Marker B-262 should remain in its current location, highlighting the site on which the historic event it commemorates occurred. Any Fairfax County consideration of an action or resolution to do otherwise should be fully and clearly communicated to County residents as part of an open and transparent public process to consider such action(s) and/or resolution(s), and to receive public comment and input on the same.

To be consistent with the inscription on the plaque of the Marr granite obelisk, it may be appropriate for Fairfax County to work with VDHR concerning revising the marker text to highlight the death of the first soldier, rather than the first Confederate Officer, in the Civil War.

C. The two cannon adjacent to the Marr granite obelisk were donated to Fairfax County by the U.S. Army in 1910. Both cannon are U.S. naval Dahlgren guns that have no historical connection to either the June 1, 1861 skirmish at Fairfax Courthouse or to John Marr’s death.

BRCWRT Position: From an historical accuracy perspective, it would be appropriate for Fairfax County to consider relocating the two cannon to an historically relevant and appropriate site or facility, based on factually accurate and relevant research to identify the origin, history and use of the cannon.

2. The BRCWRT has significant concerns with how Fairfax County has, to date, implemented the process for considering potential actions with respect to the Civil War related monuments or memorials located at the Fairfax County Judicial Complex.

A. Contrary to the statement included in the public hearing legal notice published on August 15, 2020, the monuments, memorials, markers, etc, located at the Fairfax County Judicial Complex are not “owned by the Board of Supervisors”. On the contrary, as public property, the citizens of Fairfax County own these items.

B. Due to the ambiguous language in the published legal notice and the lack of additional information or clarification from Fairfax County, the purpose of the September 15, 2020 public hearing has not been clearly established nor is it clearly understood. Whether the public hearing is the beginning of a transparent and public process, or a final public comment opportunity preceding a Board vote on a resolution and/or proposed action, has not been established. If the purpose is the former, we expect the County to provide specific information on the process to be implemented and its associated timeline/milestones. If the purpose is the latter, several pieces of relevant information have yet to be publicly provided, including: the resolution or proposed action(s) under consideration; the process and timeline used to develop the resolution or proposed action(s) and how the public was involved in that process; and the rationale as to why such information was not included in the published legal notice.



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C. The notification and notice of the public hearing was very limited.

- The legal notice was published in the classified section of the *Washington Times* on August 15, 2020. However, the notice was not published in any Fairfax County newspaper, either print or on-line editions, nor was it posted on the Fairfax County Government webpage.
- The draft agenda for the September 15, 2020 Board of Supervisors Meeting was posted on the Board of Supervisors Meetings and Committee Meetings webpage (<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/2020-board-meetings>) on the afternoon of September 4, 2020. The draft agenda identified the subject public hearing as an agenda item, but merely repeated the text contained in the legal notice.
- To the best of our knowledge, as of September 7, 2020 no mention of this public hearing or the Board's consideration of the Civil War related monuments and memorials located at Fairfax County Judicial Complex has been included in any Supervisor's weekly newsletter and updates routinely provided to their respective constituents/residents.

BRCWRT Concern: The lack of information on this Board initiative is surprising given the property being discussed is public property concerning Fairfax County's history and the scheduled hearing is a public hearing. Our concern is the seeming lack of transparency surrounding this specific Board initiative and associated Board discussions and intended actions.

The Bull Run Civil War Round Table remains ready, willing and able, with its members' relevant knowledge and expertise, to work in partnership with the Board of Supervisors and the County Staff in future discussions and potential actions regarding the Civil War related monuments or memorials located at the Fairfax County Judicial Complex.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Whitenton
President
Bull Run Civil War Round Table