



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

OCT 18 2010

IN REPLY REFER TO:
D20 (NCR-LRP)

Ron McBee, Chairman
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D
P.O. Box 71156
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Commissioner McBee:

I am writing regarding a proposal to add the designation "Banneker Memorial" to the L'Enfant Metro signage. Please be advised that a memorial in honor of Benjamin Banneker does not currently exist, nor is there current authority to establish such a memorial on federal parkland in Washington, D.C. Section 512 of Public Law 105-355, approved in 1998, had authorized the Washington Interdependence Council (WIC), subject to the standards of the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. Chapter 89)(CWA), to establish a Banneker memorial. The authorization expired nearly five years ago in 2005. Therefore, in our view, a proposal to add a Banneker Memorial designation to the L'Enfant Plaza Metro would be inappropriate at this time.

Background

In 1971, the Secretary of the Interior named U.S. Reservation 719, the assembly of land at the south end of the L'Enfant Promenade, Benjamin Banneker Park. However, the naming of a geographic feature by the Secretary of the Interior does not surpass the role reserved to Congress – the authority to establish commemorations on lands controlled by the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the General Services Administration.

The park is under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS), a bureau of DOI, and is subject to the CWA. When the WIC began the process of selecting a site, the park, and specifically the overlook plaza, was considered but explicitly rejected by the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC). Instead, a site within the L'Enfant Promenade, in the Federal street right-of-way administered by the District of Columbia north of Reservation 719, was recommended. However, as the Promenade is not under DOI jurisdiction, and therefore not subject to the CWA, the WIC had the opportunity to seek approval of the District of Columbia Government to locate the commemoration, or to consider other sites. We are aware of no further action by the WIC to establish the memorial within the Promenade.

Current Status

In September 2010, S. 3886 was introduced in the Senate to grant authority to the WIC to establish a Banneker Memorial in Benjamin Banneker Park. Congressional selection of a site is unusual, and is a role that since 1986 has been delegated by the Congress, through the CWA, to the federal agency administering the affected property, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Capital Planning Commission. Given the late stage of the current session of Congress, it appears unlikely that the bill will

be passed and that the requisite corresponding action will be taken by the House of Representatives before the end of the session.

The NPS is also aware that Ms. Peggy Seats of the WIC has circulated information that implies that the rehabilitation of the L'Enfant Promenade and the construction of an intermodal transportation center on Reservation 719 are imminent. The NPS is not aware of a pending project for the reconstruction of the promenade and we can say with certainty that there has been no recent discussion of the intermodal transportation project. Also, the NPS has not been approached regarding the proposal to build a "Banneker Institute" on Reservation 719.

Conclusion

Please do not regard this letter as a statement of either support for or opposition to a commemoration of the accomplishments of Benjamin Banneker. Such judgments are the domain of the Congress. Rather, we thought it appropriate that the members of ANC 6D fully understand the facts regarding the proposed Banneker memorial.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Glenn DeMarr, Project Manager at (202) 619-7025.

Sincerely



Peter May
Associate Regional Director
Lands, Resources and Planning

cc:

Gabe Klein, Director
District Department of Transportation

Thomas Luebke, Secretary
Commission of Fine Arts

Marcel Acosta, Executive Director
National Capital Planning Commission

Peter Benjamin, Chairman
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority