



PALM BEACH CENTENNIAL COMMISSION, INC.

January 27, 2022

The Honorable Mayor Danielle Moore
& Town Council
c/o Office of the Town Manager
Town of Palm Beach
360 South County Road, 2nd Floor
Palm Beach, FL 33480

Re: Town Square Stair Addition

Honorable Mayor and Town Council:

Palm Beach Centennial Commission, Inc. (PBCC) supports the construction of stairs on the back (south) side of Memorial Fountain to improve the aesthetic appearance of the new Town Square Park and connect it with Memorial Park which is located on the front (north) side of the Fountain.

We have championed this idea as the final stage of a legacy project to honor the Town's Centennial that started over 10 years ago. The idea of joining the new and old parks has been popular with many residents for a long time.

Several years ago, a majority of the Town Council voted to support the addition of stairs conditioned on receiving approval from the Florida State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The State was among the entities that contributed to the cost of renovating Memorial Fountain and the terms of that grant gave the State the right to object to alterations to the Fountain for 10 years.

After considering the previous design of stairs that attached directly to the rear wall of the Fountain and descended into the Town Square, SHPO expressed no objection to the proposed stairs, but correctly reminded the Town to review the applicability of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when moving forward on this project. The Town reviewed the issue and recommended that the stairs be redesigned with a platform lift to comply with ADA requirements.

Accordingly, PBCC approached internationally known, classical architect, Richard Sammons, to design a new set of stairs with ADA access. Renderings that show his new design are attached.

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The new design offers the following features:

1. The stairs include a readily available, self-operating, standard platform lift that fully complies with the requirements of the ADA.
2. The stairs are designed in full compliance with The U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (36 CFR Part 68, 1995).
3. The stairs are attached to the Fountain by way of a platform that separates the new addition from the Fountain and requires the removal of only 4 feet of the existing retaining wall (as compared to 12 feet in the previous design). That small section of the wall can be easily stored in the pump room house should it ever need to be replaced.
4. The stairs are designed with classical proportions utilizing double stairs and a "vanity wall" that hides the lift.
5. The stairs are shorter in length than the previous single stair plan. The result is increased "green space" compared to the previous design (of course, it is important to note that the Town Square Park did not exist when the Fountain was originally designed so virtually every bit of space on the south side of the Fountain provides additional "green space" for the Town).

Our zeal for this stair addition is based solely on a desire to make the Town Square Centennial Legacy Project as beautiful as possible. We have studied and lived with the current condition of this area for 10 years. We believe it is incongruous to separate a significant public monument (The Fountain) from a newly created park (Town Square) simply because it was designed many decades ago under different conditions that no longer exist, no matter how revered the original designer.

We believe a set of Stairs on the back side of the Fountain enhances the entire area by unifying the new and old parks without detracting from the original design. In fact, the new stairs are invisible when standing in front of the Fountain, so the original look and view of the Fountain and Memorial Park are perfectly preserved. In accordance with historic guidelines this is the best way to adapt to the new conditions.

Clearly, these stairs are more attractive than the existing plain pump room door which they are designed to replace. The previous "function" of the Fountain was to hide the unsightly garage doors of the Fire Station. Therefore, the Fountain "form" contained an elevated platform and a back side wall that was never intended to be seen by the public.

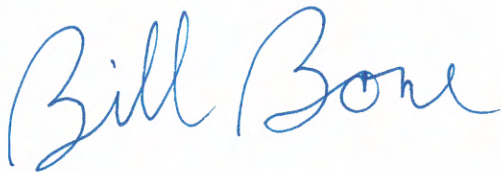
Preserving something that was never intended to be seen in lieu of creating something beautiful that will exist in perpetuity respects both the noble goal that beauty is an essential component of any design and the commonsense rule that form should follow function.

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If the Stair Project is completed as we propose, and if the Town permits the placement of historic markers and plaques as previously described when we donated the funds to help renovate the Town Square, PBCC will reimburse the Town for all the costs to construct the new stairs.

For these reasons, we urge the Town Council to vote in favor of adding stairs to the back (south) side of the Fountain.

Kindest regards,



BILL BONE
President,
Palm Beach Centennial Commission, Inc.

cc: Mr. Kirk Blouin, Town Manager
Mr. Jay Boodheshwar, Deputy Town Manager