

Study Session Regarding the George Washington Bust in the City Plaza

AUGUST 3, 2020

Purpose of Study Session

- Purpose:

- To present background information on the George Washington bust and its placement in the City Plaza
- To facilitate a community conversation
- To gather information to determine next steps

- Not to:

- Decide on final action

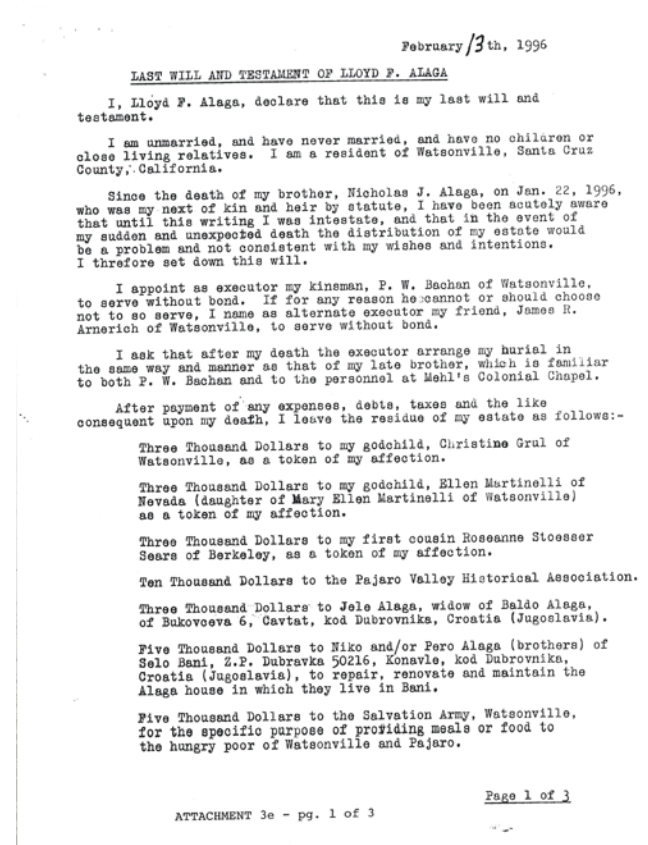
The facilitation of this Study Session does not signal City support or opposition to the retention of the bust.

Process

1. Conduct a Study Session to facilitate a community conversation.
2. Using Community and Parks and Rec Commission feedback, staff will develop next steps, which may include further research, additional information gathering, additional study sessions or opportunities for public input, etc.
3. Develop options for the Parks and Recreation Commission to consider at a later meeting.

Lloyd F. Alaga

- Born and raised in Watsonville, attending Moreland Notre Dame Academy and Watsonville High School.
- Passed away in 1997
- Was unmarried, with no children or close living relatives
- Gift from the Alaga Estate to the City
 - \$200,000 for Library reference works
 - \$100,000 for a George Washington bust



Last Will and Testament

Five percent of its value to the City of Watsonville, which in this testator's opinion suffers from a dearth of public statuary, for the purpose of acquiring a bust of George Washington made by a sculptor of reputation in the style called representational or realistic, to be placed in the City Plaza on a plinth or block, if possible made of the characteristic granite from the Aromas Granite Rock Quarry, with a plaque or carved inscription reading: "George Washington, 1732-1799, Father of His Country" and the old saying "First In War, First In Peace, First In The Hearts Of His Countrymen", and a discreet inscription at the side or back that the monument is the "Gift of Lloyd F. Alaga".

Why George Washington?

Mateo Lettunich, Lloyd Alaga's cousin, stated in a eulogy for Lloyd "...he has left a sum of money to the City of Watsonville if they will erect in the Plaza, a statue of – George Washington! And I think I know why. Gramp, his Uncle Motto, was very proud of being an American, and felt that America had given our family everything it had...philosophically (this bequest reflects) his belief in what is right, what is just."

Production of the Bust

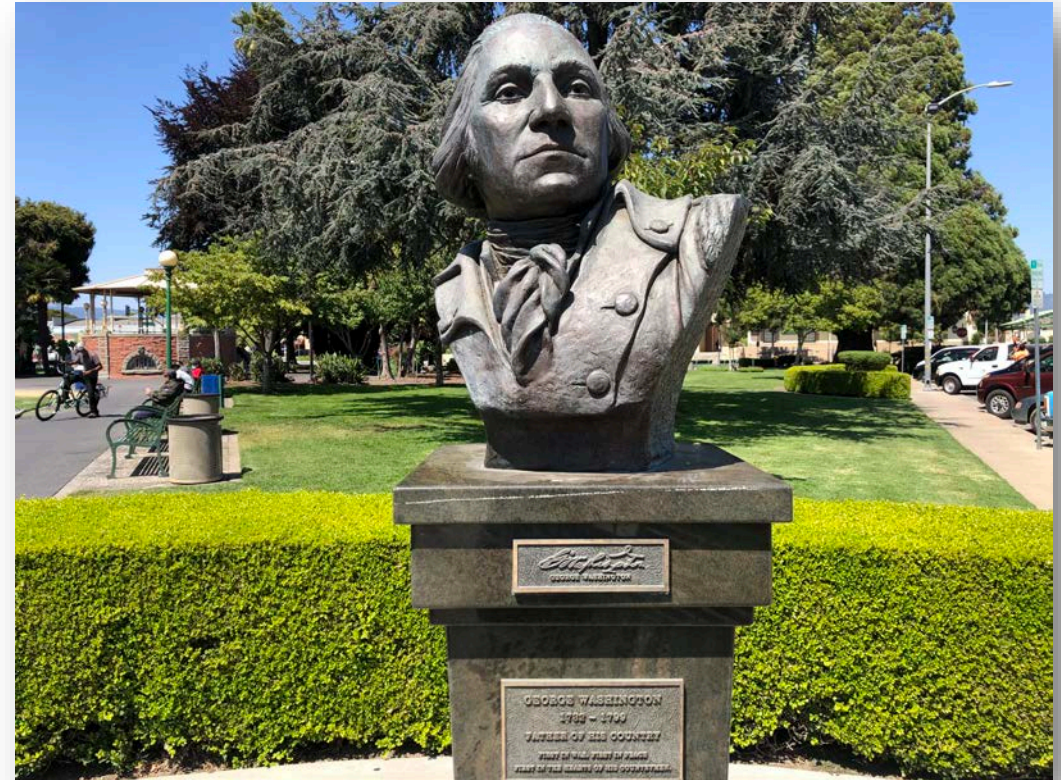
- June 1997 – Lloyd F. Alaga passed away
- May 1999 – Watsonville City Council accepted the gifts of \$100,000 for the bust (the remainder to be used to restore the fountain) and \$200,000 for library reference works
- Late 1999 – City released RFP calling for artists to create and install the a bust
- April 2000 – City entered into agreement with artist Michelle Armitage for \$70,000



Production of the Bust (cont.)

February 2001 – Unveiling ceremony held in the City Plaza.

“...a slightly larger than life size (32-36 inches high) bust of George Washington, rendered in bronze, and mounted on a rectangular pedestal (approx.. 54 inch high), of concrete and granite; extracted from the ‘Granite Rock Quarry’ at Aromas.” The bust was “cast using a technique called ‘Lost Wax,’ a process that dates back for centuries. The original sculpture is molded in clay. A mold is taken from the clay sculpture to cast a wax edition. Through the ‘lost wax’ process, the ‘wax’ (becomes) the finished bronze sculpture.”





George Washington
GEORGE WASHINGTON

GEORGE WASHINGTON

1732 - 1799

FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY

FIRST IN WAR, FIRST IN PEACE

FIRST IN THE HEARTS OF HIS COUNTRYMEN

GIFT OF LLOYD F. ALAGA
1919 – 1997

**GEORGE WASHINGTON MONUMENT
BY MICHELLE ARMITAGE**

**A GIFT TO THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE
FROM LLOYD F. ALAGA**

**CAST AT AMERICAN FINE ARTS FOUNDRY
CONCRETE DONATED BY GRANITEROCK**

DEDICATED ON FEBRUARY 22, 2001

Historic Designation

- City Plaza added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.
- George Washington bust has not been added as a feature of the Plaza's designation.



Community Input

- Petition to “Remove George Washington statue from Watsonville Plaza”
 - Created by “Revolunas” on change.org
 - 1,357 digital signers
 - Staff have not yet received a copy of signed petition

Petition Text:

Washington owned 100s of Slaves during his lifetime. He also aided in the genocide of the Indigenous people of this land.

He is the epitome of White Supremacy!

If we are going to display representations of men like Washington in a public space, we should then include features that reflect their dark, inhumane and genocidal qualities as well!

We urge the community to sign this petition to take down this blatant display of racism and white supremacy standing so boldly in Downtown Watsonville.

If monuments are meant to be permanent tributes to individuals and what they stand for, this idea is laden with many flaws and this bust does not reflect the values of our community and it MUST be removed.

Community Input (cont.)

- Petition to “Save the George Washington Statue in our downtown park.”
 - Created by a community member on change.org
 - 26 digital signers
 - Staff have not yet received a copy of signed petition

Petition Text:

Dear Watsonville Community,

There's been discussions for removing the statue of George Washington in our beautiful downtown park. This goes against all that we are as a nation of free democratic Americans. George Washington was our first president and the father of our lovely country. He served our country proudly as our first military general and again as our first commander in chief. His accomplishments and dedication to this country should not be removed from our beloved park, as he is a symbol of freedom and cohesiveness for all Americans. Let's keep George with us!!

Community Input (cont.)

- Petition to “Save Watsonville George Washington Statue.”
 - Created by a community member on gopetition.com
 - 448 digital signers, 40 paper signers
 - Staff have received a copy of signed petition

Petition Text:

The Watsonville Parks and Recreation Commission will be meeting to consider the removal of the George Washington statue from the city plaza.

In addition to serving as our country's first president, George Washington was the man who established the American republic and successfully led the revolutionary army against the British Empire. Washington was a farmer, a businessman, and supported and promoted commerce. After serving as president, he returned to farming.

In 1999, the Watsonville City Council voted unanimously to accept a \$100,000 gift from the Estate of Lloyd F. Alaga for the George Washington Bust and to fix the beautiful water fountain at the Plaza. Mr. Lloyd Alaga, was a Watsonville native of Croatian descent. He also donated \$200,000 to the Watsonville Library.

The bust is located in the Watsonville Plaza and is the work of local artist Michelle Armitage <http://www.michellearmitage.com/largerworks.html>

The statue was dedicated in February of 2001. The plaza is a historical landmark, formed in the late 1800s and is on the National Register of Historical Places...

We, the undersigned citizens of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley call upon the Watsonville Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council to not remove nor relocate the George Washington monument from the City Plaza.

Community Input (cont.)

- All three petitions may contain signatures from residents and non-residents.
- City Council, City Manager, City Clerk PCS Department, Parks and Rec Commission and Parks and Community Services Director have received many emails regarding this matter.
- Sit In on July 17 – Hosted by Revolunas in front of the George Washington bust. Attended by community members both in support of and against its removal.
- Rally on July 31 – Hosted by community members in favor of keeping the bust. Attended by community members both in support of and against its removal.

Contact with the Alaga Family

- Staff have been in contact with two known descendants of Lloyd F. Alaga
- Descendants have requested to move the bust to a safe location, should it be removed from the Plaza.
- One descendent is attempting to contact other family members.

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Questions?
