

# Study Session Regarding the George Washington Bust in the City Plaza

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AUGUST 3, 2020

# Purpose of Study Session

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- 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

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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

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1996

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF LLOYD F. ALAGA

I, Lloyd F. Alaga, declare that this is my last will and testament.

I am unmarried, and have never married, and have no children or close living relatives. I am a resident of Watsonville, Santa Cruz County, California.

Since the death of my brother, Nicholas J. Alaga, on Jan. 22, 1996, who was my next of kin and heir by statute, I have been acutely aware that until this writing I was intestate, and that in the event of my sudden and unexpected death the distribution of my estate would be a problem and not consistent with my wishes and intentions. I therefore set down this will.

I appoint as executor my kinsman, P. W. Bachan of Watsonville, to serve without bond. If for any reason he cannot or should choose not to so serve, I name as alternate executor my friend, James R. Americh of Watsonville, to serve without bond.

I ask that after my death the executor arrange my burial in the same way and manner as that of my late brother, which is familiar to both P. W. Bachan and to the personnel at Mahl's Colonial Chapel.

After payment of any expenses, debts, taxes and the like consequent upon my death, I leave the residuum of my estate as follows:-

Three Thousand Dollars to my godchild, Christine Grul of Watsonville, as a token of my affection.

Three Thousand Dollars to my godchild, Ellen Martinelli of Nevada (daughter of Mary Ellen Martinelli of Watsonville) as a token of my affection.

Three Thousand Dollars to my first cousin Roseanne Stoesser Sears of Berkeley, as a token of my affection.

Ten Thousand Dollars to the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

Three Thousand Dollars to Jela Alaga, widow of Baldo Alaga, of Lukovska 6, Cavtat, kod Dubrovnik, Croatia (Jugoslavia).

Five Thousand Dollars to Niko and/or Pero Alaga (brothers) of Selo Bani, Z.P. Dubravka 50216, Konavle, kod Dubrovnik, Croatia (Jugoslavia), to repair, renovate and maintain the Alaga house in which they live in Bani.

Five Thousand Dollars to the Salvation Army, Watsonville, for the specific purpose of providing meals or food to the hungry poor of Watsonville and Pajaro.

# Last Will and Testament

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*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?

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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

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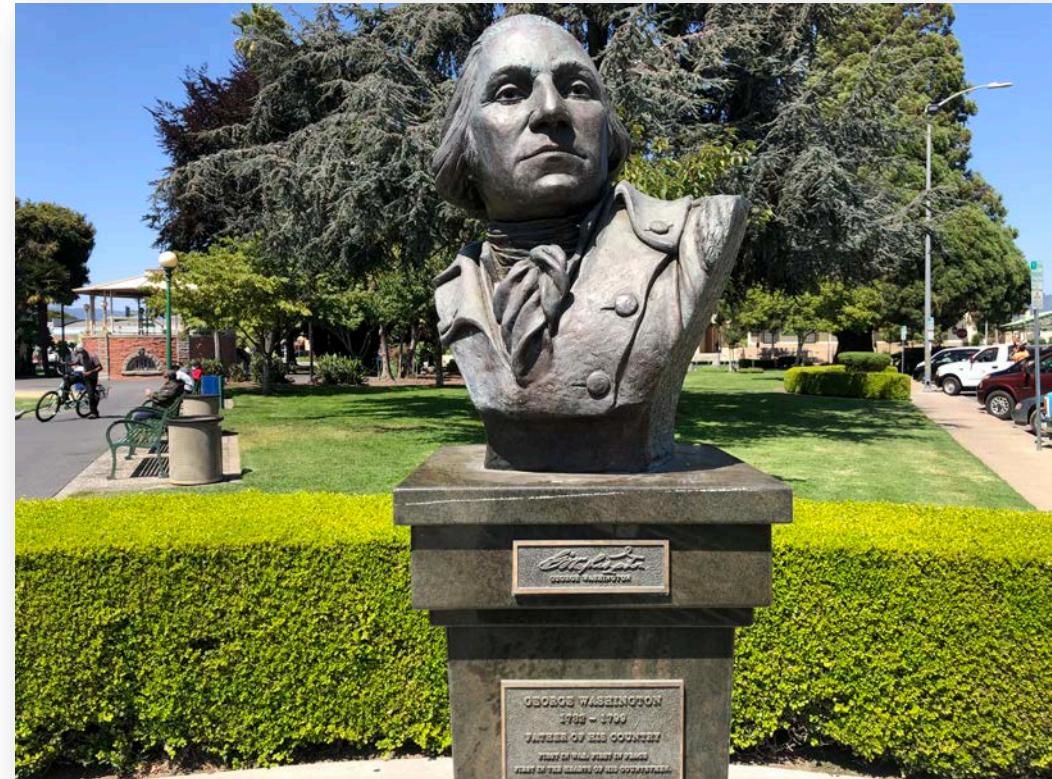
- June 1997 – Lloyd F. Alaga passed away
- May 1999 – Watsonville City Council accepted the gifts of \$100,000 for the bust (the remainder to be used to restore the fountain) and \$200,000 for library reference works
- Late 1999 – City released RFP calling for artists to create and install the a bust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

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- 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

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- 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.)

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- 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](http://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.)

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- 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

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- 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 descendant is attempting to contact other family members.

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# Questions?

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