



**Minnesota State Capitol Preservation Subcommittee  
Art Subcommittee  
December 7, 2015 Meeting Summary**

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**Attendees**

- Subcommittee: Hon. Paul Anderson (presiding), Sen. David Senjem, Rep. Diane Loeffler, William Green, Peter Hilger (by phone), Ted Lentz, Gwen Westerman, Steve Elliott (ex-officio), Paul Mandell (ex-officio), Michael Laphorn on behalf of Matthew Welch, Matt Massman
- Support: Erin Campbell, Cathy Klima, Alice Roberts-Davis, Kathy Morgan, Curt Yoakum, Brian Pease, Brian Szott, David Kelliher, Mariah Levison, Beth Kleinboehl, Cassandra Moore
- Interested Parties: Scott Russel (Healing Minnesota Stories – St. Paul Interfaith Network), Sue Gens (Minnesota State Arts Board), media and others

**1. New business**

- a. New committee member was introduced. Misa Jefferies, curatorial assistant from the Walker Art Center. Prior to the Walker Art Center, she worked New York and has sat on commissions.

**2. Military Art**

- a. Major General Rick Nash provided perspective about the importance of the military art in the Capitol, which helped the art subcommittee to better understand the role Minnesota played in the Civil War and the impact Civil War art has on military members and veterans today. General Nash indicated he would provide a copy of his prepared remarks. In response to a question, he said was not aware of any increased risk of activating PTSD reactions in veterans and war survivors based on the increased vividness of paintings depicting war injuries after their restoration.

**3. Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)**

Executive Secretary Paul Mandell talked about the role of the CAAPB in managing the Capitol art.

- a. CAAPB has statutory authority for public and ceremonial spaces in conjunction with Minnesota Historical Society.
- b. The Minnesota Historical Society is responsible for the inventory of Capitol art as the “Person of registrar.”
  - i. Registrars maintain facility reports, contracts, and legal records associated with acquisitions, inventory, incoming and outgoing loans, shipping, and insurance.
- c. The Minnesota Historical Society inventories the Capitol historic furniture.
- d. A “do not exceed” size of Governors’ portraits was incorporated after Gov. Ventura’s portrait in 1997. The size of portraits started to increase because of the desire to depict cultural icons in the background. Conventions of portraiture over the centuries also influence size.



- e. Mandell cited Minnesota Statute [138.67](#) – **Definitions for works of art, public areas of the State Capitol, State Capitol archives, public gallery and orientation area (1971)**
- f. Mandell cited the following Minnesota Statutes to help educate the subcommittee about the Minnesota Historical Society’s role in managing the Capitol art.
  - i. [138.68](#) – **Supervision of Preservation (1971)**.

The works of art in the public and ceremonial areas of the State Capitol are declared to possess historical value for the people of Minnesota. The Minnesota State Historical Society and the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board shall approve the design, structural composition, and location of all monuments, memorials or works of art presently located in the public and ceremonial areas of the State Capitol or which shall be placed in such public or ceremonial areas after June 4, 1971. No monument, memorial or work of art shall be relocated or removed from, or placed in such areas or altered or repaired in any way without the approval of the Minnesota State Historical Society. The Minnesota State Historical Society shall have final authority over the disposition of any monuments, memorials or works of art removed from the State Capitol or the Capitol grounds.
  - ii. [138.69](#) – **Public areas of the Capitol (1987)**. The Minnesota State Historical Society is designated the research agency and is responsible for the interpretation of the public areas for visitors to the Capitol. This involves conducting or approving public programs and tours in the Capitol and State Office Building, including exhibits held in the Capitol, providing informational services, acting as advisor on preservation, recommending appropriate custodial policies, and maintaining and repairing all works of art.
  - iii. [138.70](#) **Capitol Building Powers and Duties (2011)**. The Minnesota Historical Society shall:
    - (1) assist and advise in research and preservation of historical features of the Capitol building, appropriate custodial policies, and maintaining and repairing works of art according to section [138.69](#);
    - (2) jointly, with the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, review and approve the design, structural composition, and location of all monuments, memorials, or works of art presently located in the public and ceremonial areas of the Capitol building, or proposed for placement in the public or ceremonial areas, according to section [138.68](#);
    - (3) assist with planning and design of restoration and renovations of the Capitol building in order to provide public access and education through public interpretive programs according to the society's statutory responsibilities under section [138.69](#); and
    - (4) assist the State Capitol Preservation Commission with performance of its duties as needed.
  - iv. Mandel noted that changes for this statute have been enacted since 2011 and he will provide an updated document for the committee.



#### 4. Inventory of art since 1905

Rep. Loeffler noted that while much of the subcommittee's discussion has focused on the original 1905 fine art, we need to also review the rest of the existing collection. As has been the tradition of the subcommittee, this will be a brief overview to get members thinking about these components in anticipation of more discussion in the future. Given time constraints, this was a brief presentation. The committee will learn more from the Historical Society as the discussion resumes.

Rep. Loeffler presented summary information about art added after 1905 based off of the [full inventory of art in the Minnesota State Capitol \(PDF\)](#) developed by the MN Historical Society and some initial research by the Legislative Library to determine the significance of the persons portrayed and the context in which the decision to memorialize them was made.

- a. There were 65 pieces added after 1905. Examples discussed:
  - i. Only two tell Minnesota stories paintings
    1. 1936 - River Fishing Scene mural in Justices' dining room.
    2. 1935 – Old Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon River.
  - ii. Portraits of national leaders
    1. 1932 President Abraham Lincoln portrait added to House Chamber.
    2. 1960 President George Washington portrait added. While the inventory notes it hanging in room 125, it hasn't been there in over 10 years. It may be in a Senator's office.
  - iii. Former legislators
    1. 1920 - Charles Gilman portrait added. Legislative library couldn't find a record on why this short-term legislator's portrait was added or his accomplishments.
    2. 1990 - Sen. Gordon Rosenmeier – legislative legend, portraits added. This long-term legislator has two portraits in Capitol.
    3. Sen. Joe Rolette, a legislator from the 1800s – A friend of his had two large portraits of him fur trader clothing commissioned. He donated one to the Historical Society and one to the Minnesota Club. His claim to fame: he ran off with bill intended to change Capitol site from St. Paul to St. Peter and became a symbol of independence. The Historical Society once wanted to move it to an exhibition and ran into legislative objections.
  - iv. Statues
    1. Spirit of Government in House Chamber
  - v. Busts
    1. 1926 - Cass Gilbert
    2. 1944 – Sen. William Windom 1880s, U.S. Secretary of Treasury
    3. 1974 – Gov. Henry Hasings Sibley, 1<sup>st</sup> Mn Governor (1858-1860)
    4. 1974 – Rep. Ignatius Donnelly U.S. Rep 1880s, Lt. Gov.
    5. 1974 - William Watts Folwell, U of M President 1869-1884



6. 1977 – V.P. Humbert H. Humphrey
7. 1983 – Sen. Nicholas D. Coleman 1960s-1980s
8. 1984 - Warren E. Burger – Chief Justice U.S. Supreme Court

vi. Others

1. 1985 - Sigvard Olson – environmentalist
2. 1986- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
3. 1986 – Chief Wabasha, III - Mdewakanton-Dakota. He didn't use the III after his name, but it was used to distinguish him from others named Chief Wabasha.
4. 1990 Edward Burdick – Chief Clerk and Parliamentarian, MN House of Rep 1966-2005. Added to the entry of the House Chamber by House action after an initial determination found it didn't meet the established criteria to be within in the House.
5. Unknown -Gov. Winfield Scott Hammond (Jan-Dec 1915), Rep 1907-1915.

vii. Plaques ( many were added in the 1920s and 1930s) – There are 15 plaques in total

1. 1938 - Floyd B. Olson. He also has portrait and a statue on the Capitol grounds.
2. 1928 - Gettysburg Address
3. 1928 - Memorial Day Order
4. 1939 – Martha Ripley – suffragist, physician, founder Maternity Hospital
5. 1927 – Clara Ueland – suffragist, 1<sup>st</sup> Pres MN League of Women Voters

These two women represent two of the three women portrayed in the Capitol who lived in Minnesota and made a mark on it. The other is Lola Perpich as first lady in Gov. Perpich's portrait.

- b. Loeffler noted that the art honoring senators in Senate offices vs. public spaces may reflect that the Capitol had functioned as the office building for the Senate for a long time. With the new Minnesota Senate Building, there may be another cause for review of some individual pieces.
- c. Loeffler proposes that the subcommittee revisit rules about why a person is honored by art in the Capitol. We have discussed permanent, semi-permanent and other designations and that may play a role. There is a need to establish guidelines that the person is honored if his or her achievement has stood the test of time. Also, how many pieces of art may any generation add to the collection?
- d. Rep Loeffler will supply a report for the appendix of the preliminary report working with the Historical Society.

## 5. Public input meetings recap

- a. There were 11 meetings held around the state. Meetings were held in Rochester, North Minneapolis, Willmar, Mankato, South Minneapolis, Duluth, Bemidji, St. Paul, Hutchinson, Bloomington, and Minnetonka.
- b. Many attendees mentioned how honored they felt being able to be involved in helping shape the future policies for art in the Capitol.



- c. Conversations were very respectful; not debates.
- d. There was a wide range of perspectives represented in all meetings.
- e. Many ideas about how to display art and kinds of art were brought up in meetings.
- f. People were very thoughtful when expressing their views.

## 6. Consensus building update

- a. Facilitator Mariah Levison provided her initial analysis based on about half of public input sessions, half of the online survey results, and the committee deliberations via her [Consensus Building Update](#).
  - i. She stressed that since public input is still being received, the presentation is based on partial information. She said it is possible things could change, however the meetings have been fairly consistent.
  - ii. The creative ideas captured from the public were not discussed at this meeting.
- b. The update included findings on:
  - i. Themes emerging on the role of new art in the Capitol.
  - ii. Topics for new art.
  - iii. Themes emerging on the role of Governors' portraits.
  - iv. Themes emerging on what to do with art that some people feel is insensitive or inaccurate.
  - v. Statistics from the online survey

## 7. Open discussion on Governors' portraits and controversial art

Themes of the discussion included:

- Whether the Capitol is best understood as a public space, museum, or both.
- Why people come to the Capitol. Whether or not one of those purposes is to educate themselves.
- Education that Capitol provides should include civics, not just history.
- Whether there is a need for more discussion of the civil war art.
- The significant opportunity that virtual displays present. Ex: engage youth, allow visitors to take in as much or as little information as they desire.
- People who support removing or moving some the art and people who would like to see art remain as it is both want their story to be told.
- There is strong agreement about the value of significant interpretation but questions about whether that is possible or practical in the Governor's reception room.
- Need for further discussion with Native American community. Need to identify proper channels of communication.
- Leaving most controversial pieces where they are would not be acceptable to some committee members. Moving some pieces out of the Capitol entirely would not be acceptable to other committee members.



- What to do when a group that is small in number has strong feelings about something. How to balance numbers versus impact.
- Need to have a broader discussion about the art. One that is not limited to 2-4 paintings.
- Recognition that there will be some change to Cass Gilbert's plan and vision (there are now more women's restrooms) and questions about how much change is the right amount. Change does not need to be either/or.