



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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Date: July 15, 2026
To: Members of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Executive Secretary, CAAPB;
Peter Musty, Principal Planner and Administrator of the Rules for Zoning and Design, CAAP;
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Other Project Updates

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Speaker Melissa Hortman Tribute at the State Office Building (SOB) Site

In May 2026, the Minnesota Legislature directed the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB) to oversee the process for selecting the designer of a tribute honoring Speaker Melissa Hortman and her deceased family members. The State Legislature, furthermore, requires CAAPB to work directly with Speaker Hortman's immediate family to secure their approval throughout the selection process for the project. The tribute will be incorporated into a memorial garden at the State Office Building site by the Department of Administration. The final design must include the likeness of Speaker Hortman and her deceased family members.

The budget for the tribute is \$800,000. This figure does not include the memorial garden, which is already under development by the Department of Administration. Funding expires for the tribute in June 2029.

Rules Exception

The authorizing legislation—listed below—exempts the tribute from the CAAPB Rules process for commemorative works (Minnesota Rules 2400.2703).

Authorizing Legislation

H.F. 2484, Article 2, Sec. 7. MELISSA HORTMAN MEMORIAL.

(a) \$800,000 of the appropriation to implement the updated Capitol Mall Design Framework under Laws 2023, chapter 62, article 1, section 11, subdivision 2, as amended by Laws 2025, chapter 39, article 1, section 39, is to design, procure, and install a tribute recognizing Melissa Hortman. The tribute shall be incorporated into the design of a memorial garden on the State Office Building site by the Department of Administration. Minnesota Rules, part 2400.2703, shall not apply to the activities funded under this section.

(b) Notwithstanding any law or rule to the contrary, the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board must select the artist to create the tribute via a competitive process and obtain the approval of the immediate family of Melissa Hortman throughout the selection and design approval process. The tribute design shall include the likeness of Melissa Hortman and deceased family members of Melissa Hortman.

Scoping a Review Process

CAAPB staff met with the CAAPB's Advisory Committee on two occasions to discuss planning for the Speaker Hortman tribute project since the end of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session.

At the first meeting, held on May 21, 2026, CAAPB staff and Advisors addressed issues related to review and engagement. Specifically, they discussed when, where, and how the design selection should depart from the review process outlined in Minnesota Rules 2400.2703; how best to incorporate public feedback; details on engaging Speaker Hortman's immediate family members; other aspects of stakeholder engagement; and the size and possible make-up of a selection committee for the tribute.

CAAPB staff and Advisors discussed details of the tribute project again on June 18, 2026. This discussion instead centered on troubleshooting a possible competitive process for selecting a design, or designer, for the tribute. Among other things, staff and Advisors addressed: design guidelines; evaluation criteria; submission requirements; prizes and honoraria; what stage of design development the competition should target; expectations regarding the tribute and its integration into the larger memorial garden; and how best to communicate the scope of the tribute project vis-vis the memorial garden to possible designers.

Design Framework Document

In tandem with these efforts, since the last CAAP Board meeting, CAAPB staff solicited feedback on a draft design framework document from CAAPB Advisors, Board member Michael Bjornberg, and representatives of MNHS (specifically, Brian Pease, David Kelliher, and Lindsey Rulon-Miller). This document outlines project parameters, design guidelines, and specifics related to the competitive process for selecting a designer/design. Staff is revising the framework to address these comments.

Final planning materials connected to the project may include: (1) a design framework document; (2) a review and engagement plan, which includes guidance on involving Speaker Hortman's immediate family in the selection process and design development; and (3) information on the make-up of the designer/design selection committee.

Next Steps

Going forward, CAAPB staff will complete the design framework document and other planning materials. While doing so, staff is seeking to connect with Speaker Hortman's immediate family members to solicit feedback on the proposed process.

Commemorative Works Activities Fund: Public History Project RFP

On April 16, 2026, the Request for Proposals (RFP) closed for a new public history project focused on the urban history of commemorative works within the Capitol Area. The project is funded through a portion of a one-time legislative appropriation for commemorative artwork activities available through June 30, 2027.

Since then, we have finished evaluating proposals, and CAAPB staff will be entering contract negotiations with the highest-scoring vendor shortly. Details on the evaluator team and proposals received will be released once the contract is finalized.

The selected consultant team will prepare a general audience narrative report on the Capitol Area's environmental, social, and urban development history; develop guided and self-guided tour programming; create an analytical report and dataset documenting commemorative works in the Capitol Area; and conduct public outreach activities to support ongoing dialogue about past and future commemoration practices.

The work will examine the relationship between the Capitol Mall's memorial landscape, postwar urban renewal, interstate construction, and the evolution of the Capitol Area as a civic and commemorative space.

The project is funded through legislative language in H.F. 1830, which appropriated \$500,000 to the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board "to support commemorative artwork activities," with funds available until June 30, 2027.+

Update on Commemorative Works Applications

CAAPB staff has made progress on the four active commemorative works applications since the June 4, 2026, CAAP Board meeting.

Gold Star Blue Star and World War I Applications

Specifically, CAAPB staff opened public comment periods and scheduled public hearings for two memorials: the Gold Star Blue Star addition request and the World War I plaque modification request. The public comment period for both applications runs from June 22-July 22, 2026. Public hearings for both applications are scheduled for July 21, 2026, at Capitol Commons (546 Rice Street). The hearings will be held successively. The hearing for the Gold Star Blue Star addition request will occur from 4:00-5:00 pm on July 21, followed by the hearing on the World War I modification request, which will last from 5:00-6:00 pm that day. Teleconference options have been made available for those members of the public interested in participating in the hearings virtually.

The CAAP Board authorized its staff to open a 30-day public comment period and host one public hearing on both applications at the last CAAP Board meeting on June 4th.

More information on the Gold Star Blue Star application, as well as details regarding its public comment period and hearing, can be found [here](#). Further details on the World War I plaque modification request and its public comment period and hearing is posted [here](#).

The Downtown Baseball Park (“The Pillbox”) and Emergency Medical Services Line of Duty Death (EMS LODD) Applications

On June 4, 2026, the CAAP Board authorized its staff to begin drafting a design framework document and assembling a design review group for the Downtown Baseball Park (“pillbox”) and EMS LODD memorial addition requests currently under review. The framework documents and review group participant lists for both projects will be brought to the Board for consideration a later date.

Since then, CAAPB staff began working with applicants to confirm project parameters, such as budget. Staff also reached out to a selection of individuals to gauge their interest in taking part in the design review group for the Downtown Baseball Park memorial project. Each of these individuals has previously had involvement with the project.

More information on the Downtown Baseball Park addition request can be found [here](#). See [here](#) for further details on the EMS LODD Memorial application.

Tree Planting (2026-2027) and Prioritization

CAAPB staff is developing a long-range landscape strategy for the Capitol Area to balance competing priorities including commemorative works, tree canopy expansion, civic gathering space, and preservation of open space and historic character. The proposed policy establishes “priority use zones” within the Capitol Mall and broader Capitol Area, assigning a principal use to different areas and ranking other compatible uses and design features to help prevent incremental loss of flexibility, capacity, and historic clarity.

The strategy is intended to complement the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Capitol Mall Design Framework by providing clearer guidance for long-term landscape planning and for reviewing future applications related to commemorative work additions, removals, and modifications. Staff will coordinate with the Department of Administration and other stakeholders in developing the prioritization policy for Board consideration.

Zoning Rulemaking

Staff updated the zoning rules to allow solar installations on residential properties (without a CUP), consistent with the Board's June 4, 2026, resolution. Staff is continuing through the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) rulemaking process, including preparing the rules in the Revisor's format and initiating the public comment period through publication in the State Register.