



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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Date: 9/16/2024
To: Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Executive Secretary, CAAPB
Peter Musty, Principal Planner, CAAPB

Commemorative Work Application for Removal (Relocation): USS Ward Gun



The USS Ward Number Three Gun

This large gun, from a World War I-era Navy Destroyer, fired on and sank an enemy vessel in the very early morning of December 7, 1941. The crew was comprised of Naval Reservists from Minnesota. After the war, the United States Navy agreed to loan the gun to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs with the assurance that the state properly maintain it (please see supplemental materials, Part 2/Items A & B). The gun was installed on the State Capitol grounds in 1958. The gun is owned by the United States Navy.

In 2023, the Minnesota State Legislature allocated funds to the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs for the construction of a new 40,000 square foot Military and Veterans Museum on 32-acres at Camp Ripley (Just north of Little Falls). The new facility, to open in 2026, will replace a very modest museum at Camp Ripley that has served veterans and their families for more than 40 years.” – *Photo and History from application by Randall Dietrich, Executive Director, Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum*

Staff Acceptance of Application, Review, and Preliminary Findings

CAAPB Staff received an application from Randal Dietrich, Executive Director of the Minnesota Military & Veterans Museum, for removal of the Commemorative Work USS Ward Gun from the Capitol Mall on 8/19/2024. CAAPB staff reviewed the application and determined it to be complete on 8/26/2024 (within the 10 days allowed per Minnesota Rules “Rules” 2400.2703, Subp. 7).

The application from Executive Director Dietrich is included in the packet, and he will be in attendance at the Board meeting to answer questions about the application. The application includes images of the Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum in Little Falls (near the entry to Camp Ripley on Highway 371), letters of support, drawings of the proposed museum location of the gun, and a description of the proposal.

According to the Rules, once CAAPB staff determine that an application is complete, board staff must review the modification or removal request and analyze whether the request meets one or more of the conditions in Minnesota Rules 2400.2703, subp. 6.

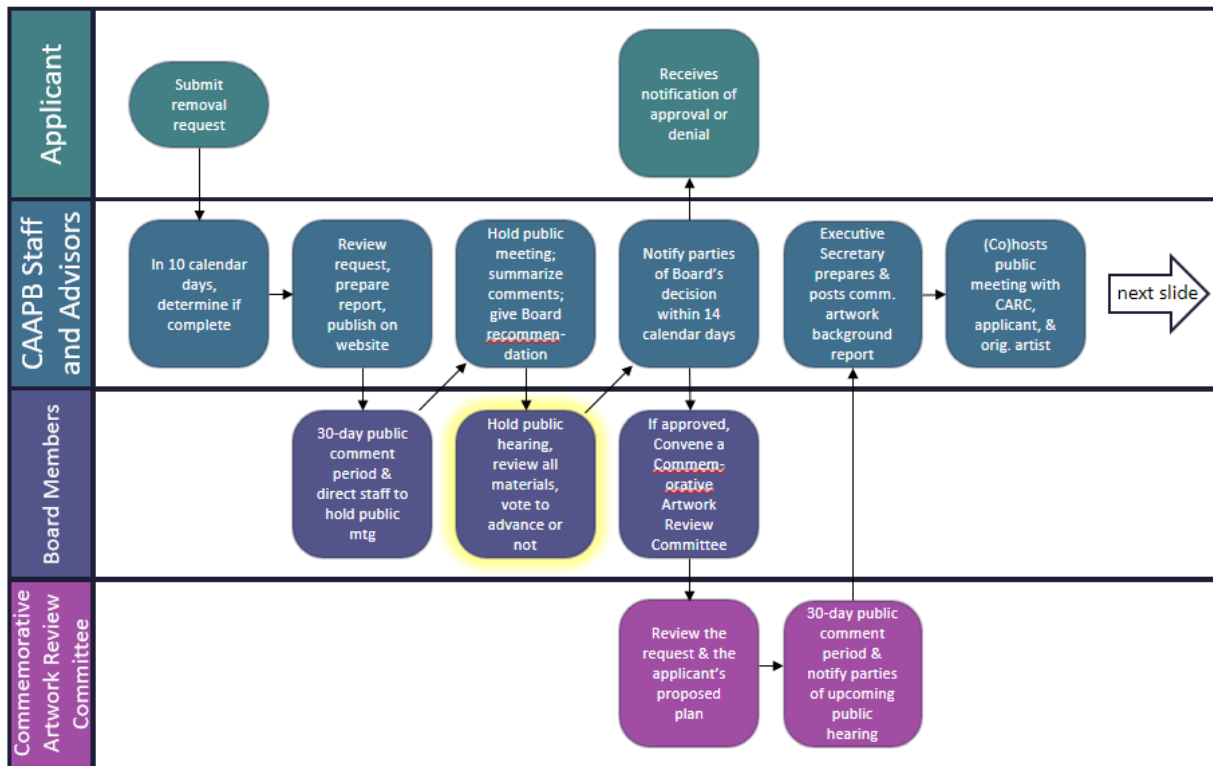
Subp. 6. Conditions for modification or removal of an existing artwork.

- A. there has been sustained, broad-based, and documented public objection to the artwork;*
- B. the artwork conflicts with the guiding principles in subpart 1, item A;*
- C. the artwork has faults in construction or requires maintenance such that the Department of Administration is unable to properly care for or store the artwork;*
- D. the site for the artwork is no longer safely accessible to the public or is due to be demolished; or*
- E. significant changes in the use, character, or design of the site require a re-evaluation of the relationship of the artwork to the site.*

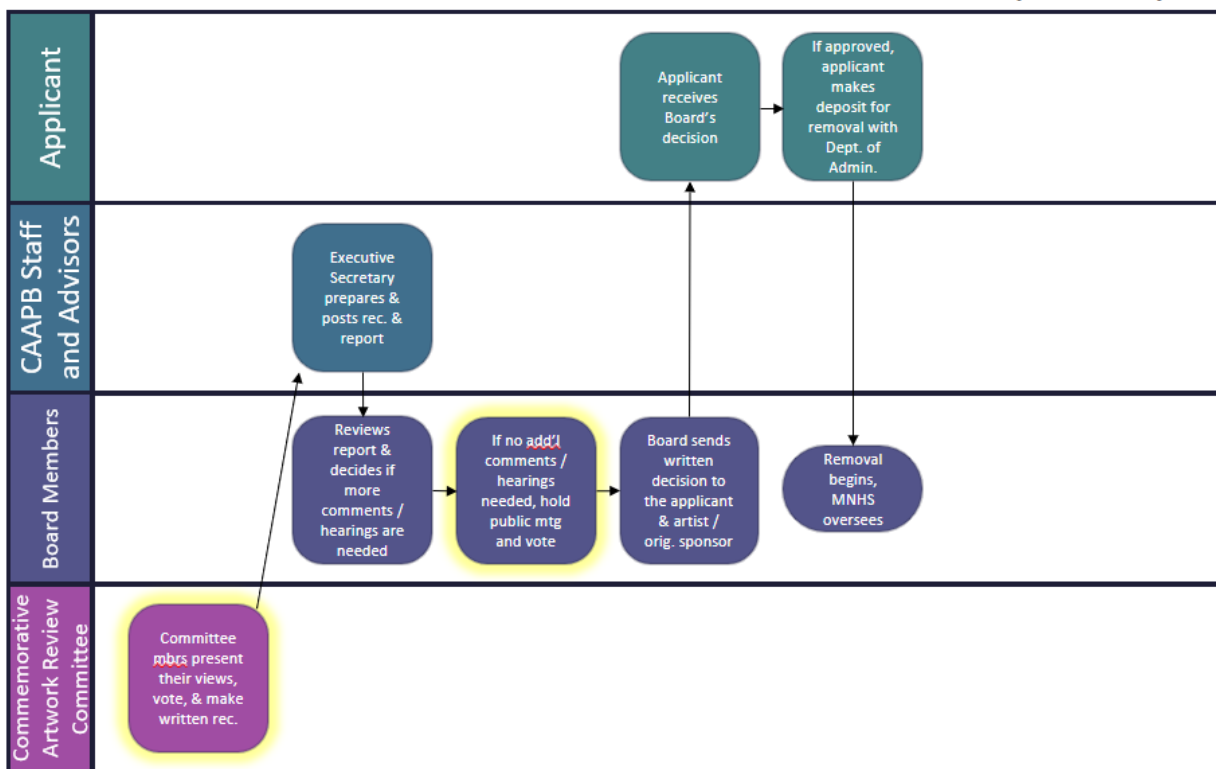
As directed by Rules, CAAPB staff reviewed the application within 10 calendar days of receipt and assessed the Commemorative Work based on the required conditions in Subpart 6. **CAAPB staff finds that the removal request meets the condition of M.R. 2400.2703 Subpart 6., Item C.**, “the artwork has faults in construction or requires maintenance such that the Department of Administration is unable to properly care for or store the artwork.”



Commemorative Works Removal Process (1 of 2)



Commemorative Works Removal Process (2 of 2)



Preliminary findings relevant to Rules for Commemorative Works

CAAPB staff recently benefited from seeing information related to the process of establishing the current site of the USS Ward Gun at the Capitol Mall and the process of maintaining the gun over the years. CAAPB staff, assisted by MNHS staff, consulted with the Department of Administration RECS and FMD leads. The Department of Administration has done an excellent job caring for the USS Ward Gun, an important artifact from the first days of the United States' involvement in World War II (Pearl Harbor). The USS Ward gun is made of steel and the outdoor exposure to elements will continue to impact its integrity. The Department of Administration received one-time funding for maintenance of the Ward Gun and performed maintenance and restoration at that time. Unfortunately, there are currently no dedicated funds for future maintenance. The exposure to elements will continue to degrade this valued piece of history. The lack of dedicated maintenance funds for an outdoor memorial will inevitably result in continued degradation. Therefore, this application for removal of the USS Ward Gun meets the conditions for M.R. 2400.2703, Subpart 6, item C. and the CAAPB staff recommends moving the Commemorative Work removal process forward.

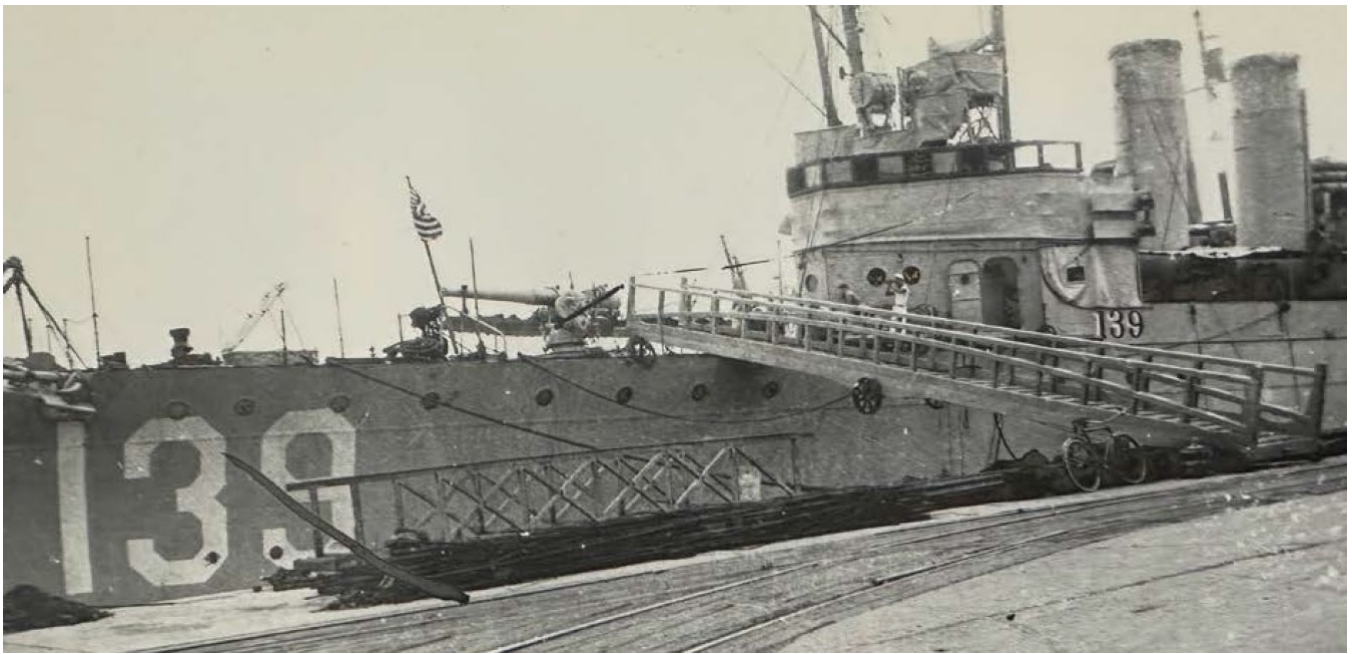
Important note: In addition to information related to the history of the gun, its ownership, and its siting here at the Capitol, CAAPB staff is aware of the particular importance of the gun to veterans groups and veterans families based in Saint Paul, the long process of establishing the gun in its site on the Capitol Mall, and the process of maintaining the gun over the years. This is important information that Staff will offer the CARC and the public for review and discussion in the coming process.

This memo to the Board serves as the required 'report' to the Board on the completed application. The memo and the application are available on the CAAPB website.

With the Board's affirmation, staff will set a 30-day public comment period and direct CAAPB staff to host/cohost at least one public meeting to gather input on whether the removal request meets one or more of the conditions in subpart 6. The public meeting may be hosted, organized, and managed according to subpart 10. Once the 30-day comment period and public meeting are complete, CAAPB staff will prepare a written summary of the public comments and provide a recommendation to the CAAPB on whether to accept the application and proceed to the next step in review process. A majority vote of the full CAAPB is required to accept the application for removal as complete and advance the application for further review by the Commemorative Artwork Review Committee (CARC), established by the CAAPB.

The CARC must include:

- 1) one board member;
- 2) one architectural adviser;
- 3) one person appointed by the commissioner of the Department of Administration to represent the agency;
- 4) a representative from the Minnesota Historical Society;
- 5) two professionals appointed by the board experienced in the fields of visual art, public art, art history, architecture, or history. One of the professionals must have knowledge of artwork conservation;
- 6) two members of the public appointed by the board;
- 7) up to five additional committee members appointed by the board as needed for professional expertise; and
- 8) board staff that oversee and support the committee's work.



Staff will develop a recommendation for membership of the CARC and forward it to the Board Chair for approval after the public hearing to keep the very thorough Rules process moving forward expeditiously. The image above is the USS Ward with the gun mounted. The image below is a rendering of the Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum now under construction near Little Falls, MN in central Minnesota (near Camp Ripley).



Suggested Board Resolution

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (“Board”) authorizes its staff to move forward the process required by CAAPB’s Rules for Commemorative Works, as it relates to the application filed on August 18, 2024, to remove the USS Ward Gun. Specifically, the Board authorizes Executive Secretary to:

- create a report for the Board (see attached memo as preliminary draft) that outlines the preliminary findings, and asks the Board to authorize Executive Secretary to move forward with next steps as directed by the Rules;
- publish the application information at CAAPB website;
- publish the staff report (Board memo) to the website;
- hold a public hearing;
- form a Commemorative Artwork Review Committee (CARC) (see memo).

The Board wishes to further make clear that approval of these intermediate steps in the Rules process does not communicate approval nor disapproval of any portion of the current proposal by the applicant, and approval of these steps does not equate to agreement or judgement as to the veracity of any claim or assertion within the received application.