

Report of the Capitol Preservation Committee to the 2023 Kansas Legislature

CHAIRPERSON: Patrick Zollner

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS: Senator Elaine Bowers; and Representatives Fred Patton and Valdenia Winn

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS: Chase Blasi, Melinda Gaul, Tim Graham, Will Lawrence, Sharon Wenger, and Larry Wolgast

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS: Frank Burnam and Kate Van Steenhuyse

CHARGE

Review Various Issues Regarding the Capitol

Pursuant to KSA 75-2269, the responsibilities of the Committee are:

- Approving all proposals for renovation of all areas of the Capitol, the Capitol's Visitor Center, and the grounds surrounding the Capitol to ensure that the historical beauty of the areas are preserved;
- Preserving the proper decor of such areas;
- Assuring that any art or artistic displays are historically accurate and have historic significance;
- Overseeing the location and types of temporary and revolving displays of the Capitol, including the visitor center; and
- Overseeing the reconfiguration or redecoration of committee rooms within the Statehouse.

Capitol Preservation Committee

ANNUAL REPORT

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Capitol Preservation Committee:

- Recognizes the passing of Dr. Jennie Chinn, Executive Director of the Kansas State Historical Society, and past Chairperson of the Committee. Dr. Chinn was passionate about the Committee's work and the update and decor of the Statehouse, often volunteering herself for subcommittee work and finding out information to assist the Committee in its efforts. The Committee thanks Dr. Chinn for her devotion to the restoration and conservation of the Statehouse and her love of and passion for Kansas history, with the belief that all Kansans should be proud of their state's history;
- Acknowledges the passage of SB 330 and SB 479 by the 2022 Legislature, which authorizes the Committee to approve plans to place permanent memorials honoring Kansas Gold Star families (SB 330) and Kansas suffragists (SB 479) on the Statehouse grounds;
- Recommends moving forward on the completion of *Ad Astra* Plaza, and asks a legislator to request legislation be drafted that will clarify the process for receiving donations and oversight of the project;
- Recommends the League of Women Voters of Kansas select a site for the Suffragist Memorial and move forward with the request for proposal process. Once completed, the League of Women Voters of Kansas will present the proposed memorial to Suffragist Memorial Subcommittee for approval; and
- Recommends that a legislator introduce legislation to authorize the installation of a mural honoring the 1st Kansas Colored Voluntary Infantry Regiment. The Committee has also approved the creation of a subcommittee for the mural project.

Proposed Legislation: None.

BACKGROUND

The Capitol Preservation Committee was created by the Legislature in 2010 to approve renovation proposals in all areas of the Capitol, the Capitol Visitor Center, and the Capitol grounds to ensure the historical beauty of those areas are preserved, preserve the proper decor of those areas, assure any art or artistic displays are historically accurate and have historic significance, approve the location and types of

temporary displays, and oversee the reconfiguration of committee rooms within the Capitol. As provided by KSA 75-2269, the Division of Legislative Administrative Services is responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Committee.

The Committee is composed of 12 members, with the Governor appointing 3, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House each

appointing 2, and the Minority Leaders of the House and Senate each appointing 1.

The Committee's three ex officio members are the Statehouse Architect, the Director of the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission, and the Executive Director of the Kansas State Historical Society. The Governor has the authority to appoint the chairperson from the Committee's membership.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Committee met on October 25, 2022, at the Capitol. During the meeting, the Committee received updates on Statehouse and Statehouse grounds projects, the Liberty Bell Replica, *Ad Astra* Subcommittee and Suffragist Subcommittee reports, the history of the 1st Kansas Colored Voluntary Infantry Regiment Mural, and information about committee room artwork planning.

Statehouse Update

The Director of the Office of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration, stated the Overmyer murals in the first floor of the Statehouse began flaking in 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conservation work on the murals was delayed; however, the Director reported that conservation work has been completed. The Director also detailed various maintenance projects that will commence in 2023 and stated that signage for the Statehouse Parking Garage and ground-level entrances directing visitors to the Visitor Center have been updated.

Liberty Bell Replica

The Director, along with a Committee member, provided information about a Liberty Bell replica that was once on display in the Statehouse, but was removed for the Statehouse renovation and has since been in storage in the Statehouse Parking Garage. The full-size replica Liberty Bell was one of 57 replicas that was created as a result of a 1950 bond drive. Every state and territory and the Truman Library received a replica to display. Kansas is one of three states that does not have the replica on display—the testimony indicated this can be a disappointment to visitors who travel the country

to see all 50 replicas. The replica is too large to be placed back inside the Statehouse. The Director stated there is a proposal to place the replica on the grounds of the Docking State Office Building, as part of the Docking Building renovation project. The costs for installation would be included in the contractor's bid.

Ad Astra Subcommittee

The Chairperson of the *Ad Astra* Subcommittee provided an overview of the Subcommittee's report on the completion of *Ad Astra* Plaza, which is located on the southwest quadrant of the Statehouse grounds. When the *Ad Astra* statue was placed on the Statehouse Dome, the artist created a smaller replica version of the statue that was intended to be placed in *Ad Astra* Plaza. A granite base for the replica was created and placed on the plaza, along with several bronze plaques; however, there are engraved bricks for the plaza along with more bronze plaques and brick pavers that have been created but have not been installed. The family of the artist that created *Ad Astra* has possession of the replica statue and the remaining uninstalled bronze plaques and brick pavers.

The Chairperson of the Subcommittee stated a fund had been established at a local Topeka foundation approximately six months prior to the Committee meeting, and \$10,000 has already been raised to complete the plaza project. No state money would be appropriated for the project; however, legislation will be needed to allow for funds to be donated to an account within the State Treasury.

Suffragist Memorial Subcommittee

The Chairperson of the Suffragist Memorial Subcommittee provided an overview of the Subcommittee's report on the construction of the Suffragist Memorial in the Statehouse. The Chairperson also discussed a new RFP (request for proposal) provided by the League of Women Voters of Kansas.

The Committee discussed with representatives of the League of Women Voters of Kansas regarding selection of a site in the Statehouse for the memorial, the RFP process, and the form of the memorial.

[Note: Subcommittee reports are published with the October 25, 2022, meeting minutes and are available at:

http://kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/committee/s/ctte_2011_capitol_preservation_committee_1/documents/]

1st Kansas Colored Voluntary Infantry Regiment Mural

The Assistant Director for Research, Kansas Legislative Research Department, provided background information on the 1st Kansas Colored Voluntary Infantry Regiment. The regiment, often reference as “first to serve,” holds a distinctive place in Kansas and the Nation’s Civil War experience. Kansas was the first Northern state to recruit, train, and send Black soldiers into combat during the war between the states.

The Legislature first passed legislation in 2000 authorizing two state agencies to develop plans to place a mural in the Statehouse that honors the regiment and submit those plans to the Joint Committee on Arts and Cultural Resources (SB 660; codified at KSA 75-2264). In the Joint Committee’s report to the 2002 Legislature, it recommended the completion of the mural be delayed until after Capitol Restoration. Later legislation in 2013 eliminated that committee and did not establish a successor committee to oversee or receive such plans.

In the 2018, 2019, and 2021 interims, this Committee supported legislation regarding the mural including its financing and installation; legislation was introduced during the 2022 Legislative Session (SB 468, HB 2660), but those measures died in committee.

The Committee discussed the logistics of legislation and the process of approving and installing a mural in the Statehouse, using the *Brown v. Board of Education* mural process as an example.

Committee Room Artwork

The Director of Legislative Administrative Services (LAS) stated that committee room artwork was removed during the Statehouse renovation and has never been replaced. For the

most part, the artwork was owned by the chairpersons whose committee met in the room.

The Director indicated LAS has received a donation of \$28,000 from an anonymous donor to provide artwork for the committee rooms. The Director stated that he worked with the Kansas State Historical Society staff to look through the historical collection owned by the State, and there are not very many suitable pieces for the Statehouse.

The Director stated he has been looking primarily for artwork to purchase, as university museums are unwilling to loan artwork due to lack of security in the committee rooms. He said he reached out to the donor to determine whether the donor has a preference on the kind of artwork displayed in the committee rooms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recognizes the passing of Dr. Jennie Chinn, Executive Director of the Kansas State Historical Society, and past Chairperson of the Committee. Dr. Chinn was passionate about the Committee’s work and the update and decor of the Statehouse, often volunteering herself for subcommittee work and finding out information to assist the Committee in its efforts. The Committee thanks Dr. Chinn for her devotion to the restoration and conservation of the Statehouse and her love of and passion for Kansas history, with the belief that all Kansans should be proud of their state’s history.

The Committee acknowledges the passage of SB 330 and SB 479 by the 2022 Legislature, which authorizes the Committee to approve plans to place permanent memorials honoring Kansas Gold Star families (SB 330) and Kansas suffragists (SB 479) on the Statehouse grounds.

The Committee recommends moving forward on the completion of *Ad Astra* Plaza, and asks that a legislator request legislation be drafted that will clarify the process for receiving donations and oversight of the project.

The Committee recommends the League of Women Voters of Kansas select a site for the Suffragist Memorial and move forward with the

RFP process. Once completed, the League of Women Voters of Kansas will present the proposed memorial to Suffragist Memorial Subcommittee for approval.

The Committee recommends that a legislator introduce legislation to authorize the installation of a mural honoring the 1st Kansas Colored Voluntary Infantry Regiment. The Committee has also approved the creation of a subcommittee for the mural.