



COLUMBIA ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Edward H. McDowell	Chair	Present
Sam Davis	Member	Present
Howard E. Duvall	Member	Present

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. City of Columbia Bull Street Park Naming - Dr. Bobby Donaldson, University of South Carolina / Director for the Center for Civil Rights History and Research and Ms. Robin Waites, Executive Director for Historic Columbia

Mr. Henry Simons, MHA, Assistant City Manager recalled that the decision was made to ask Dr. Donaldson and Ms. Waites to evaluate the names they initially recommended to the committee and then scale that list down for consideration.

Dr. Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at the University of South Carolina said there are so many worthy individuals but a creative way to include as many persons as possible is to develop a general name for a park that will be very intentional in having multiple histories represented and reflected in the park. Two years ago, I received a letter from Ms. Freddie Johnson, former resident of the Booker Washington Heights Community and great-great-granddaughter of Mr. Hilliard Bell who was a laborer and cook at the State Hospital property. Ms. Johnson's mother suggested that we name the stadium The Peoples Stadium. Perhaps an appropriate name for this park would be Citizens Park in response to a citizen writing this letter years ago and in honor of the Richland County Citizens Committee that was established in the mid-1950s. Members of this committee called for improved mental health facilities and resources for African Americans, they challenged racial segregation in mental health facilities, and they pushed for greater improvements and investment in parks in African American communities.

Ms. Robin Waites, Executive Director/Historic Columbia Foundation said a Citizens Park would include wayfinding signage and create an experience for visitors to the park. An early map of the Bull Street Campus shows the Wallace Estate, which was a plantation owned by W.H. Wallace. The Thompson Family: Samuel B. Thompson, E.B. Thompson, Caroline Thompson Allen, and Clarissa Thompson Allen emerged from this plantation. Alonzo McClennan likely spent part of his youth on the grounds of the asylum. He is best known for his integration of the Naval Academy in 1873. If the park is named after an individual, Page Ellington would be our top



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recommendation. He was integral to the construction and the physical footprint of the Bull Street Campus and Columbia. He is credited with designing many of the key structures on the campus. William Nash was a Reconstruction Era legislator and was on the board of regents for the asylum. J.D. Harris was the assistant physician at the asylum. Benjamin Campbell was a gardener at the asylum and his story provides an opportunity to talk about the practice of horticultural therapy on the grounds. Some of our well known champions for civil rights and social justice include: I.S. Leevy who was the undertaker for the State Hospital; James Hinton was a chaplain at Craft-Farrow State Hospital; and C.J. Whitaker began working for the State Hospital early in his career and spent 40 years there. Modjeska Simkins and the Richland County Citizens Committee championed the cause of improved conditions at the asylum. Richland County Citizens of Impact include: Hilliard Bell was a laborer and cook who resided at the State Hospital Property with his family; Dr. John Bull served as the first African American member of the board of the S.C. Mental Health Commission; and Dr. Harry Wright founded the African American Studies program at the University of South Carolina and has significant ties to the William S. Hall Psychiatric Institute. These are examples of individuals we would like to include in a history trail within the park system. This is not a complete list. A board name that encompasses a lot of stories gives us the capacity to expand the stories.

Dr. Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at the University of South Carolina said Page Ellington helped to build parts of the Bull Street property. He was a very prominent citizen and political figure in his own right. He is worthy of recognition. His home is still standing on Blanding Street in the Arsenal Hill area. Clarissa Thompson is buried at Randolph Cemetery. The Thompson Family is buried there. Caroline Thompson Alston was an early prominent African American owner of a store on Gervais Street. Her relatives were Reconstruction Era figures. There are so many angles to explore with the Thompson Family. They were prominent people who helped to build Columbia and their roots are on the Bull Street Campus.

Councilman Edward McDowell said I wrote the names down and Page Ellington sticks out.

Councilman Howard Duvall said the State Mental Health Commission is going into its 200th year celebration. The chair, Greg Pearce recommended Page Ellington and he sent me an excerpt from the book *Asylum Doctor*. I suggest naming the park Page Ellington Citizen's Park. I received an email from a constituent who proposed the name New Hope Park. Then we can honor the different families and individuals with a trail similar to what's on Main Street. Does Richland County have markers that are different from the state markers. Matilda Evans and another person has already been named on the street.



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Robin Waites said there is a state historic marker program and the county certainly supports that with some of their projects. We are looking at wayside signs that are designed by a professional team and would not fall under the state historic marker program. There are lots of opportunity on that site to name a building or a street or to recognize an event or an individual. It doesn't have to be limited to the park. We hope to spread this content throughout the campus itself.

Councilman Edward McDowell said we recognize that there are opportunities to metastasize this throughout the Bull Street Campus.

Councilman Sam Davis said I am also a craftsman. I am intrigued with Mr. Ellington actually helping to build that environment and the fact that his house still exists. Bull Street is a combination of residential living and there is a connection that influences me to go with that name for the park.

Councilman Edward McDowell said I am leaning towards Page Ellington. It is intriguing to have his house still standing.

Councilman Howard Duvall asked if Page Ellington built the Parker Building; it is still there.

Ms. Robin Waites, Executive Director/Historic Columbia Foundation said the challenge is the level of documentation of Page Ellington's engagement. There is a lot of anecdotal information.

Dr. Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at the University of South Carolina said there is a question mark about what Page Ellington built and what is still standing. Clearly he had an impact and is credited with being integral. Beyond that, he was a city leader and he was very active in public affairs in this city. He was associated with multiple churches. There is a marble placard on the wall of Ladson Presbyterian Church that talks about Page Ellington who led the Sunday School program there. There is a record of his contributions. Determining where his imprint is on Bull Street will require more investigation.

Councilman Sam Davis said there is mystique to visitors when they come to Columbia and partake in the amenities the property has to offer. When I came to Columbia in 1967, I worked with several of the individuals named when I came and they all played a role in this city.

Councilman Edward McDowell asked his colleagues to identify three to four names.



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Councilman Howard Duvall said Page Ellington is my favorite and the Thompson Family would be my second choice. I can't pick a third one without looking at them further. The Bell Family needs to be on the trail. I would suggest that we propose the name of Page Ellington to Council for the park but also put to Dr. Donaldson and Robin the task of designing the first part of a commemorative trail that would encompass other areas of Bull Street and the park for other markers. We can leave that open-ended, because we have 15 names. As this becomes a built out community, we will receive the additional names.

Councilman Edward McDowell said Clarissa Thompson Allen is a strong historical point and I read about Dr. John Bull. Those names can metastasize throughout the campus. I knew about Rev. C.J. Whitaker. He was a big guy who did all of his politics sitting down in a chair. He didn't say much, but when he spoke everyone listened.

Councilman Howard Duvall suggested looking in the South Caroliniana Library box for more information on Page Ellington.

Dr. Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at the University of South Carolina said we know George Elmore challenged racial segregation and politics in 1946. His wife Laura Elmore was committed to the State Hospital after having a nervous breakdown. She lived there for the rest of her life and is also buried at the Randolph Cemetery.

There was a consensus of the committee members to propose naming the park at Bull Street after Page Ellington as the first step in commemorating others who had a significant role in developing the Bull Street Campus. We ask ACM Henry Simons, Dr. Bobby Donaldson, and Robin Waites to come back with plans for a commemorative walking trail with wayside signage.

Ms. Robin Waites, Executive Director/Historic Columbia Foundation suggested a tag line related to exploring the African American experience on the campus.

Mr. Henry Simons, MHA, Assistant City Manager said our focus can be on naming the park after Page Ellington on the wayside signage within the park. As a second phase, we can explore other opportunities on the campus with the appropriate research in coordination with the Hughes Development Corporation. The Parks and Recreation team will help but we need Dr. Donaldson and Ms. Waites engagement.

There was a consensus of the committee to support renaming of the Lyon Street City Garden to the Marvin Heller Community Garden.



We Are Columbia

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk