



# The Monument Fund, Inc.

P.O. Box 483  
Charlottesville, VA 22902

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October 15, 2019

John Blair II, Esq.  
City Attorney, City of Charlottesville  
601 East Main Street  
Charlottesville, VA 22902

*Via Hand Delivery*

*Re: Defacement of Lee and Jackson Monument Pedestals*

Dear Mr. Blair:

I write to bring to your attention damage and defacement of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee monument in what was formerly Lee Park, now Market Street Park, and the Confederate Lt. General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson monument in what was formerly Jackson Park, now Court Square Park [the "Monuments"].

Both Monuments were vandalized on or about Sunday morning, September 15, 2019, and again on the morning of the Columbus Day holiday, October 14, 2019. The vandalism was inflicted on the granite pedestals supporting the bronze statues, and consisted of disfiguring the symbols on the Monuments.

## **Notice**

This letter gives you formal notice that the damage and defacement constitute violations and/or encroachments under Va. Code §§15.2-1812, 1812.1 and 18.2-137.

## **Background**

After the first vandalism, in accord with City Manager Dr. Richardson's September 19, 2019 letter we brought Mr. Lee Hart, an expert on granite monument restoration, to inspect the Monuments on Tuesday, September 24, 2019 at 10am-12pm.

In Mr. Hart's opinion there had been multiple blows with a metal object, exceeding 12, to the granite pedestals of each of the two Monuments. On the Lee Monument pedestal half of the eagle's head was knocked off, and Mr. Hart

documented multiple chips broken off the carved decorative oak leaf relief and other sections.

On the Jackson Monument the damage was worse; figures of Faith and Valor were defaced, noses knocked off, and multiple blows had chipped away much of the sword of the figure "Valor" and the toes and robes of both "Faith" and "Valor."

In Mr. Hart's opinion, although the original artwork can never be fully restored, cosmetic repairs might be possible, at about \$1,000 to \$2,000 for each chipped area, and higher amounts for rebuilding the beak of the Lee pedestal eagle and the sword, robes, toes and faces of the Jackson pedestal figures.

Accordingly the initial September 15, 2019 vandalism comprised multiple felonies exceeding the felony limit under Va. Code §18.2-137.

The additional October 14, 2019 vandalism knocked off the eagle's head completely from the Lee pedestal. On the Jackson Monument both granite figures of Faith and Valor were extensively defaced. "Valor's" sword was mutilated, and his hands and feet attacked. The head and face of "Faith" are so completely disfigured as to be unrecognizable. Several fingers of her praying hands were destroyed, and toes and folds of her robes knocked off in multiple places.

We have not yet had an expert evaluate the cost of this additional October 14 damage. In our preliminary view it is so extensive that cosmetic repairs may no longer be possible; it may be necessary to replace the entire front section of the Jackson pedestal.

#### **Action Needed**

The Monument Fund offered twice in the last two years to team with the City to put cameras in the parks to identify or at least deter vandals. The City did not respond to the first offer and flatly refused the second, without explanation.

The Virginia State Police installed cameras overlooking both parks during the events of August 12, 2017. We are informed the City police also have cameras. There are already video cameras on the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library building next door. Some of that footage was key evidence in a recent criminal assault case.

The City's refusal of the simple and effective expedient of installing video equipment to catch and deter vandals is baffling.

Furthermore, repairs to the Monuments may be futile if the vandals remain at large. Until they are caught, prosecuted, and incarcerated, they can repeatedly destroy in minutes what takes weeks or months to repair.

City Police took photos and retrieved bits of granite from the September 15 vandalism. But we are aware of no further City police interest in or attempt at an investigation. The Monument Fund informed the City Police of the name of a person of interest who in our opinion may have knowledge about the vandalism. We are aware of no effort even to contact that person.

Failing to make any effort to catch perpetrators gives them (and us) the impression that the malicious destruction of monuments and memorials to war veterans, what are nationally renowned works of art, may continue with impunity.

### Conclusion

We call upon the City:

- (1) to work with the Monument Fund on arrangements for a second, complete expert inspection of both Monuments, and for the City to agree to pay for that expert's services, which is the needed preliminary planning for Monument pedestal repairs or replacement;
- (2) to install cameras to identify and deter vandals.
- (3) to investigate and bring to justice those vandals. Judge Moore already noted in *Payne. et al v Charlottesville et al.* that those responsible for the vandalism should pay the full cost of repairs.

Sincerely yours,



Jock Yellott

Executive Director

cc: Lisa Robertson, Esq., Deputy City Attorney  
Dr. Tarron J. Richardson, City Manager