
Confederate monument removals

2 messages

Cory Vaillancourt <cory@smokymountainnews.com>

Wed, Jun 10, 2020 at 1:43 PM

To: brianmcmahan@jacksonnc.org, boycedeit@jacksonnc.org, ronmau@jacksonnc.org, gaylewoody@jacksonnc.org, mickeyluker@jacksonnc.org

As you've no doubt heard, last night the Asheville City Council voted unanimously to remove two confederate monuments (the "Robert E. Lee Dixie Highway, Colonel John Connally Marker" adjacent to the Vance Monument, and a Battle of Chickamauga monument located next to the county courthouse) and to form a study group to determine the future of the Vance monument.

The Buncombe County commission will consider a similar resolution on June 16.

There's currently a petition on [Change.org](https://www.change.org/p/remove-confederate-monuments-in-jackson-county) asking for the removal of the confederate monuments in Jackson County.

You may also remember this expansive story I did back in August, 2017, in the wake of the Charlottesville protests. It described the situation as it existed at that time, but of course now things are different.

<https://www.smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/20606-a-monumental-issue>

Of course, North Carolina General Statute 100-2.1 says that "objects of remembrance on public property" cannot be removed or relocated without permission from the NC Historical Commission.

We have begun to see other municipalities in other states removing their statues, and in some cases, they have been removed by protestors.

With all that being said, I have the following questions for you, for a story I'm working on for Wednesday, June 17.

I understand that this is still a developing situation, but much like my stories on recreational marijuana and Second Amendment sanctuaries, I believe voters are going to start asking you these uncomfortable questions very soon, so here's your chance to get out ahead of the mob and state your opinion in a measured way.

I would appreciate it if you could email me your responses before this Sunday, June 14.

1. In light of the current state of protest across this country, do you think it's time to remove these monuments in Jackson County? Why or why not?

2. Some across the country have suggested that Confederate monuments remain, but also feature some other sort of monument or explanation putting slavery and discrimination into context. For example, the marker at the county courthouse could see an additional monument placed next to it, or some signage presenting the other side of the story. Would you favor this?

3. What are your feelings on the state commission appointed by the Governor (the NC Historical Commission) being empowered to tell counties and municipalities what to do with their monuments?

4. If you're advocating for removal of Confederate monuments and imagery, would you appeal to the NC Historical Commission for permission, or simply remove the monuments and take whatever comes from that?

Please don't hesitate to call or text me (912-508-5640) if you'd like to discuss this on or off the record, however I must insist that your official response come in email form, so I can be sure that I'm accurately quoting you.

Thanks again for all you do.

C

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Ron Mau - Commissioner <ronmau@jacksonnc.org>
To: Cory Vaillancourt <cory@smokymountainnews.com>

Thu, Jun 11, 2020 at 11:22 AM

Cory,

FYI:

I had been asked similar questions by the Sylva Herald.

Here was my response. One item that has changed from this comment is our budget meeting was held this morning so the 50k referenced below has now been requested in a budget meeting.

I have been made aware of both a petition to remove the statue and to keep the statue. These petitions provide a peaceful way for citizens to come together and present a common view on a given issue en masse.

In this case there are passionate views on each side of the conversation. I have heard from people who wish to take the statue down. I have heard from people who wish to keep the statue as is with no changes. I have heard from people who wish to add additional historical information to that area to tell the entire story. I have had suggestions of creating a monument to Jackson County citizens who have given their lives in all U.S. conflicts. Some of these options would require funding.

Government often moves slowly and when a final decision is made the last question is: "How will that be paid for?" We are in the budget planning process and I plan on requesting an initial allocation of \$50,000 to begin the process of considering potential solutions in a safe and rational manner and having funds available for implementation of a solution.

Ron

[Quoted text hidden]