

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM
401 F STREET, N.W., SUITE 312
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001-2728

202-504-2200
202-504-2195 FAX

6 December 2004

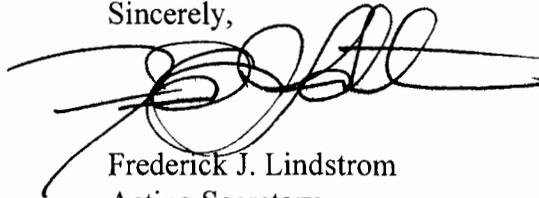
Dear Mr. Carlstrom:

On the evening before their 18 November 2004 meeting, the Commission inspected a mockup of the proposed new lighting scheme for the Washington Monument and was very pleased with the overall effect. The uniformity of the illumination from the monument's top to the bottom was seen to be a great improvement, especially when seen from a distance. It was also noted that the sides of the monument's pyramidal top were also adequately lit for the first time ever and that the total result was very good. However, when the members moved closer to the monument, they perceived the lighting on the lower portion to be just a bit too bright and they suggested the illumination on the base should be "slightly" subdued from what was shown. A slightly lower level of lighting on this portion of the monument would reduce, but not eliminate, the "craggy" appearance of the stone coursing which was perhaps overly emphasized in the mockup. We also understand that the vertical streaking at the monument's base was caused by the temporary mounts of the mockup fixtures and that the permanent mounts will have more control to avoid this ribbed effect. The details of how these lights will be installed in the plaza are a great concern to the members and they request the plans and specifications be forwarded for review when they are ready. In addition, the members agreed that the removal of the four large vaults housing the current lighting system's equipment at the outer edge of the plaza would be another great improvement for the monument grounds.

During the inspection, the members questioned the need for the blinking red warning lights at the monument top, especially if the monument is to be re-illuminated with the new brighter, more uniform scheme. These lights do not enhance this presidential memorial; in fact, it was felt that they detract from the monument's symbolic character. It seems unnecessary for these red lights to be on all the time, unless the atmospheric conditions, such as a low cloud ceiling or fog obscures the general overall illumination of the new lighting

system. Automatic backup systems or manual overrides to switch on the red lights could easily be provided for aircraft safety if the new illumination system fails or if the atmospheric conditions dictate supplemental safety lights. The Commission would vigorously endorse the limited use of the red lights and encourages the Park Service to propose such a change to the Federal Aviation Administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Lindstrom', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Frederick J. Lindstrom
Acting Secretary

Mr. Terry R. Carlstrom
Regional Director
National Capital Region
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20242

cc: John G. Parsons, NPS
Laurie Olin, Olin Partnership