



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD  
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)  
**FROM:** Serena Bolliger, Historic Preservation Planner  
**DATE:** August 7, 2023  
**SUBJECT:** CoA 23-20, 5620 3<sup>rd</sup> St. South, Ball-Sellers House Local Historic District (LHD)

**Background Information**

The Ball-Sellers House, constructed ca. 1750, is Arlington’s oldest extant house. The property includes the original one-story log cabin and a two-story frame addition. Owned by the Arlington Historical Society (AHS), the original log section and lean-to function as a museum and the Victorian-era addition serves as a residence.

In August and October 2016, the AHS received CoA 16-19 and 16-19A to install a rain garden and low wall outlining the location of a demolished historic addition. In 2017, the AHS requested a year extension of CoA 16-19A in order to complete the project as proposed.

**Proposal**

The applicant is requesting to install three 4” x 4” brass plaques mounted on stone or concrete blocks set in gravel in the corner between the sidewalk and brick pathway along the west elevation of the Ball-Sellers House. The 4”x4” wide blocks would protrude 6” from the gravel at their highest point and slope toward the sidewalk with a lowest height of 4”. The brass plaque would be installed on the sloped surface. This interpretive site element would honor the enslaved people who lived and worked at the house in the nineteenth century and is part of the AHS project “Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington, 1669-1865”. The concept is inspired by a recognition project created in Germany to memorialize Holocaust victims. The text proposed is:

- Enslaved Here, Nancy, born ca. 1775, died ca.1831-1840;
- Enslaved Here, Name Unknown, Male, Born ca. 1806 -1820;
- Enslaved Here, Name Unknown, Male, Born 1844.

Each plaque will have the Sankofa symbol, of Ghanian origin, representing “embracing past lessons for a brighter future”. The brass square plaques would be manufactured in collaboration with Arlington high school students.

**Design Review Committee Review**

The DRC considered this application at its August 2, 2023, hybrid meeting. The applicant was not present, so Ms. Bolliger presented the project on their behalf and asked for feedback for the applicant. Mr.

Dudka expressed support for the idea, and asked whether the markers could be larger so they would be more visible from the right-of-way. Given that the applicant was not present, the commissioners placed this item on the Discussion Agenda of the August 16, 2023, hybrid HALRB hearing.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends approval of this application as submitted. This would be an interesting public art interpretation of a historically under told part of the property's history. Furthermore, the markers will be installed in a way that adds to the narrative of the property without affecting the historic structure. As the applicant proposes to install the markers in the grass adjacent to the walkway and the right-of-way, and not on the home, the proposal meets the intent of Standard #10 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

As the area has already been disturbed for utility excavation and pavement installation, staff is not concerned that the installation will damage archaeological resources on the site, which complies with Standard #8 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.