

George V. Brown Makes the Cut

Statue of Hopkinton sports legend approved for Common



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March 3, 2009 — The Hopkinton Historic District Commission (HDC) approved the placement of the Michael Alfano sculpture of Hopkinton

sports figure George V. Brown, *The Starter*, on the Hopkinton Common by a 4-1 vote. The statue was commissioned by the Hopkinton Athletic Association with part of the \$250,000 stimulus money earmarked for the region in 2006.

Mr. Brown was a Hopkinton native who brought the start of the BAA Marathon to Hopkinton during his time as Athletic Director of the BAA, and the starter of the race from 1905 until 1937. He managed Olympic teams, brought Hockey to Boston University and was its first athletic director.

In addition, he managed the Boston Arena and the Boston Garden. His son Walter also managed the Garden and presided over the Bruins as well as founding the Boston Celtics. Walter's name is on the Middle School gym. A Brown family member has fired the starter's pistol at each race since 1905.

This evening's Public Hearing drew luminaries from several town boards, committees or departments, from the Downtown Revitalization Committee member Pete Lagoy, to Chief of Police Tom Irvin. Treasurer of the HAA, School



Committee member Dave Stoldt, gave the presentation to the committee Tuesday evening.

HDC member Claire Wright, looking out at the large group of supporters, suggested that there was a campaign launched in an effort to pressure her committee after it showed lackluster support at a meeting a year ago.

Mr. Stoldt said it was not the case.

"All of us in government have to look at the needs of the town," he said.

The committee received letters of support for the placement of the statue from those members as well as the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Selectmen, the Hopkinton Athletic Association, Hopkinton Chamber of Commerce, Boston Athletic Association, Fire Department, the DPW, and a personal note from Race Director, Dave McGillivray, who called it a "very worthwhile project" and offered his personal assistance. But the meeting was not without controversy.

Former Concom member and previous HDC applicant Jack Speranza demanded to know what standard of review would be used.

Chairman Michael Gerardi cited town bylaw and Mass General Law.

Later, when Mr. Gerardi suggested that aesthetics could influence his decision making process, Mr. Speranza, an attorney, warned him that if that were the case, he would be overturned in court.

"Are you threatening me?" asked Mr. Gerardi to Mr. Speranza, who filed litigation against the HDC while he had a matter before them several years ago.

"No, I just have a passion," Mr. Speranza answered.

HDC Member Beth Kelley (Absent this evening) and her husband submitted a letter in opposition to the statue, saying it is a statue, not a monument. The statue will be placed in line with existing monuments, and nearly in line with the Start line of the Marathon.

Selectmen Mary Pratt and Michael Shepard were on hand to support the statue's placement, and gave impassioned pleas.

Mr. Brown's grandson, George Burke, attended the hearing, and revealed his daughter would be running this year.

Sculptor Michael Alfano allayed fears that the Commission had of setting precedent, by saying the BAA Marathon is the longest continuously running marathon in the world, and his sculpture is specific to Hopkinton. The commission worried that there would be a long line of similar requests if they broke a precedent.

The committee voted in favor (4-1) of a motion to approve the placement of the statue, contingent on the HAA coming back with a plan for the granite base or pedestal.

"That's absolutely terrific news for this town," said HAA President Timothy Kilduff after the meeting.

"It shows the utmost respect for the significance of George Brown, not only locally and regionally, but internationally as well.

"We will work hand in glove with the commission.

"This is the way government should work," he said.