

DAVID GIACALONE
Schenectady, NY
October 25, 2021

CIVIC PRIDE AND LADY LIBERTY

Council President, Mr. Mayor, and Council Members.

I'm David Giacalone, [and have lived in the Schenectady Stockade for over three decades]. Since I last spoke here, I've been asked many times, "What will it take for the Mayor to do the right thing for Lady Liberty?" I believe that Civic Pride is the best motive for getting Mayor McCarthy to swallow his pride, and move Lady Liberty back to her home in Liberty Park.

I am proud that from 1950 to 2017, our Community treated Lady Liberty's Replica with the expected honor and respect it deserves for all it symbolizes to our nation. Our Boy Scouts earned the money to buy the statue as a gift for the City; it was received by Mayor Begley with gratitude and praise, and welcomed by 3500 people who gathered on that tiny triangle of land for its dedication. That spot was later named Liberty Park, and rededication ceremonies were held in October dozens of times over the years [with honored speakers such as Sam Stratton and sitting mayors].

Indeed, in 2012, when the time came to create a Plan to expand Liberty Park, every draft contained the only appropriate proposal: protect the statue during construction and return it to Liberty's Park after construction. [There was even a \$20,000 Line Item to pay to bring Her back.] City Council and the Mayor approved that plan in August 2013. For the next few years, there was no doubt in the public's mind that Lady Liberty would return to her Home [after being stored away in August 2017].

Since that time, however, we can't be proud of the backroom decisions and shabby treatment of our Liberty Replica. In late 2017, the Mayor announced to our surprise that Liberty needed a new home. No reason was given by the Mayor, but [the head of his Design Team] Mary Wallinger dribbled out a litany of weak justifications: the statue was "too small", despite being 3 feet taller than Lawrence [the Indian and Thomas Edison]. And, it was "not contemporary" enough to fit into her vision of the Plaza. No symbol celebrates the "past, present and future" of Schenectady better than the Timeless Lady Liberty, who speaks of

welcome, and opportunity and evolving personal liberties [like those represented by the Rainbow Pride project at the Plaza].

Arbitrary backroom decisions exiled Lady Liberty and later dumped Her in the disgraceful spot at Union and Erie Boulevard. With no public input AND no complaint by the Democrats on City Council. That brings Schenectady Civic Shame, as does the shabby treatment over the past two years.

Lady Liberty has no plaque or educational signage, no lighting, no landscaping, virtually no pedestrian traffic or visitors, and no protection from reckless drivers. She does have unsightly surroundings and clutter.

In comparison, the 100+ Boy Scout Liberty replicas still existing all have more attractive, appropriate locations, including all five New York State replicas. In fact, while we held Liberty hostage without bothering to clear or repair her, Utica and tiny Leroy lovingly refurbished their Liberty replicas. In Amsterdam, Chinese immigrants commissioned a brand new Liberty statue, dedicated three months before our Replica was dumped in shame.

None of Schenectady's Shameful conduct had to happen. It is time to be PROUD AGAIN of Schenectady. Bring Lady Liberty home, to a Park that needs Her grace and welcome. Use the existing central sculpture base that has visibility, lighting, space and seating. It sits almost exactly where Liberty was first installed.

If the Mayor won't put Civic Pride first, this Council must assert its legislative role and insist the Resolution approved in 2013 be followed

Please refurbish the Statue and our Civic Pride. Bring the Lady Home.

=====

tinyurl.com/ RespectLL

**for facts, images, documents,
history, discussion**

**Join Our RALLY
THURSDAY - OCTOBER 28
at 4 PM
at Union & Erie Boulevard**