

**SPECIAL**

# **Gaston NAACP, others sue county commissioners over Confederate monument**

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The Gaston County Board of Commissioners is facing legal action after a civil suit was filed Thursday by groups seeking the relocation of the county's Confederate monument.

A statement released by the suit's plaintiffs argues the monument's prominent public location violates rights protected by North Carolina's constitution.

"Specifically the monument exalts the cause of slavery, secession and white supremacy," according to a statement issued by attorney Cheryl Comer. "It causes particular pain to Black residents."

The suit alleges taxpayer money used to protect the monument is wasted and will be unnecessary once the monument is removed.

The groups also indicated the monument "stands illegally," as the state constitution prohibits government action that "sows disunion, denies equal protection, exhibits racial discrimination and squanders public money."

Filed in North Carolina Superior Court, the suit was launched by a trio of groups including the Gaston County arm of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Gaston County Chapter of the National Association of Black Veterans, and the Eta Mu Lambda Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.

Plaintiffs listed also include a "multi-racial group," of county residents including Karen Bringle, Gracie Moore, and Jose Troche.

The suit claims county commissioners are violating the rights of citizens in "backtracking," on an Aug. 3, vote to give the monument to a local Sons of Confederate Veterans group.

That plan was crafted after months of discussion and protests about the monument's fate, and would have relocated the memorial from its prominent post in front of the courthouse.

The SCV later backed out of that plan over concerns county commissioners were not following state law, and commissioners voted 4-3 on Aug. 25, to keep the monument where it has stood for decades.

The suit includes Gaston County, the seven-member board of commissioners, and each commissioner in their official capacity.

Gaston County Attorney Jonathan Sink said Thursday the county does not comment on ongoing legal matters.

Gaston Attorney Cheryl Comer - who cast her vote to recommend commissioners relocate the monument earlier this summer as part of a 12-member Council of Understanding - is among plaintiff's legal team.

The team also consists of Cheyenne Chambers and Abraham Rubert-Schewel, billed as civil rights specialists, attorneys Gagan Gupta and Stuart Paynter, and former North Carolina Deputy Attorney General Hampton Dellinger.

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