

Thomas Jefferson, March 11, 1793, Memorandum on Federal City Commissioners, from Thomas Jefferson and the National Capital. Edited by Saul K. Padover.

Jefferson Memorandum MEMORANDUM RELATIVE TO COMMISSIONERS FOR LAYING OFF THE FEDERAL CITY

March 11th, 1793.

Question 1st. — What sacrifice may be made to retain Mr. Johnson in the office of commissioner for the federal territory?

Answer. — For such an object, it is worth while to give up the plan of an allowance per diem; to give, instead of that, a sum in gross, and to extend that sum to five hundred dollars per annum, and expenses; the latter to be rendered in account.

If Mr. Johnson persists in resigning, as it is evident Dr. Stewart will not continue even for the above allowance, and Mr. Carroll does not appear to make any conditions, the President will be free as to Mr. Carroll and two new associates, to adhere to the allowance per diem already proposed, or to substitute a sum in gross.

Question 2d. — May new commissioners be chosen in the town?

Answer. — It is strongly desirable that the commissioners should not be of the town, nor interested in it; and this objection is thought a counterpoise for a sensible difference in talents; but if persons of adequate talents and qualifications cannot be found in the country, it will be better to take them from the town, than to appoint men of inadequate talents from the country.

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Question 3d. — How compensate them?

Answer. — If they come from the country, the per diem allowance is thought best; if from the town, a sum in gross will be best, and this might be as far as three hundred dollars a year, and no allowance for expenses. If

partly from the town, and partly from the country, then three hundred dollars a year to the former, and the same, with allowance of expenses, to the latter.

Mr. Madison, Mr. Randolph and Thomas Jefferson having consulted together on the preceding questions, with some shades of difference of opinion in the beginning, concurred ultimately and unanimously in the above answers.

[P. 437, WRITINGS OF JEFFERSON, Washington, VII.]