

# Douglass High School Commemorative Committee

Location: Frederick Douglass Elementary School Library

## MEETING MINUTES

August 23, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

APPROVED

### ATTENDEES:

**Committee Members:** Charles Avery, Dwight Brooks, Gladys Burke, Erica Bush, Valerie Bush, Tammy Carter, Carlotta Coates, Gertrude Evans, Glory Howard, Joyce Jackson, Mary Randolph, James Roberts, Larry Roeder, Larry Simms, Sylvia Smith, Michelle Thomas

**Absent:** Margaret Good

**Guests:** Charlotte Coates, Helen Avery, Janet Wiggins, Nathan Bailey

**LCPS Staff:** Kevin Lewis, Lottie Spurlock, Bev Tate, Sara Howard-O'Brien, Donna Torraca,

Charles Avery welcomed the Committee and guests and asked if there were any public comments before the meeting began. No one from the public came forward to speak.

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the August 9, 2021 meeting. No revisions were offered.

Kevin Lewis reviewed the current space configurations and uses by LCPS and Parks & Recreation, along with the proposed space uses for both groups and the areas that could be available to the public in the original 1941 portion of the building. The layouts proposed, 1941 and 1960, were reflected in each discussion. One conference room and the catering kitchen were shown to the Committee as space that would be needed by LCPS programs during the day and available in the evenings to outside groups.

Larry Roeder with the Edwin Washington Project (EWP) provided an overview of the potential use of space in the front portion of Douglass should the group be offered same. (See attached PowerPoint for additional information.) Questions from the Committee after the presentation and answered provided included:

1. Would you want exclusive space just for your use? Larry stated that EWP is willing to share space but it would have to be coordinated so that there was not interference with research efforts. Someone would need to be in the room with any visitors. Documents can be provided to show visitors available artifacts.
2. When was EWP established? 2014
3. How many days a week do you currently work in the facility? EWP is not just in the office but out visiting locations, conducting research at other facilities and gathering additional information and artifacts to be catalogued and shared with the community. We are not in the space 5 days a week, 8 hours a day.
4. If you are not in the space, can the space be shared? Yes
5. Would the community have access to all the history including Douglass? Yes. EWP is digitizing all of the documents and cataloging for access.
6. What is the 5-year plan for EWP? Is there enough space for expansion? We believe there is enough space for the timing being. At some point EWP may require more. We

do not currently have a 5-year plan but anticipate the research will continue for many years. There is Loudoun's history but also the comparative history.

7. What happens if you are not provided space at Douglass? We will continue to look for other options within LCPS.
8. What was the arrangement that Dr. Hatrick and LCPS agreed upon with EWP? The documents located within LCPS remain the property of the school district. We are custodians of the documents. EWP has provided all their own equipment such as computers and scanners. EWP has also purchased, with their own funds, the historic document holders.
9. Who could share this space with the sensitivity of materials and the configuration of desks, etc. that you have proposed? It is unclear how other community members could have access or use of the space. A docent would be available to assist with inquiries. The book cases would be locked with the sensitive information.
10. Is this 1 room or the whole right side? Larry identified the room to the west and closest to the stage, in the 1941 layout of the building as a desired space by EWP (no built in cabinets). The request is for just one room not the entire side.

Carlotta Coates with the Loudoun Douglass Alumni Association (LDAA) presented next. The LDAA was founded in 1985 to provide financial support in the form of scholarships to descendants of Douglass High School. To date they have awarded \$300,000 in scholarships. The LDAA has always met at Douglass and wishes to continue to do so but is requesting dedicated space for their headquarters, which currently does not exist. The space would be used weekly for meetings by both the Board of Directors and Executive Committee as well as smaller committees. LDAA requires space for files, mail, storage and day to day operations of the 501©(3) organization. **(Please reference the attached statement for additional information)**  
Questions and answers included:

1. How much space would you need for an office setting? LDAA is not certain of the square footage but would need meeting space to accommodate 20 Board of Director members.
2. How would the space be organized, and can the community come and view those items? Yes, the community would be welcome to come and review artifacts and they would be similar to those mentioned by the EWP. The artifacts would be on display for the general public in the public areas of the building but the office functions would need to be private.
3. Could you separate your office and meeting space? Dedicated office space is to conduct business. We could fit in a space similar to that indicated by EWP. It is not LDAA's preference to share office space. This is not just about meeting space. We are a business and have financial records. We need a home.
4. Why not have a smaller space for office and a larger space for meeting? We could certainly use a smaller room. We have 35 years of materials.
5. What is the 5-year plan for LDAA? We hope to continue to organize and raise funds. We do a 1-2 year plan but have not done a plan out to 5 years.
6. When are your meetings? Large group meets on Saturday mornings. We have other meetings that are during the week.

Douglass High School Commemorative Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
August 23, 2021

7. Could the MOU provide or secure the larger space for meeting on a set basis? Kevin Lewis responded yes and cited the MLK events as an example. The regular meetings could be added to the calendar and established for the year.
8. Will what you have planned take away from the original plan for Douglass? No, we want people to know this is Douglass High School
9. How are you going to commemorate this building? How does LDAA fit in with the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee? We all have stories, some that overlap with other organizations and we are willing to work with others in telling the story. We are willing to give tours and tell anyone who comes into the building the story. Who better to tell the history of Douglass High School than those who attended and can share their story?

Michelle Thomas with the NAACP Loudoun Branch provided an overview of the historical connection with the school. The NAACP Loudoun Chapter has been a proponent for lack education since the formation of the branch in 1940. They want to share the story of segregated education and want to preserve the history. If space should be dedicated to them they would like to display a timeline with newspaper articles and memorabilia of the struggle for black education. For additional information see PowerPoint attached. Questions from the community and visitors, along with answers include:

1. Would a smaller space work for the NAACP? We would need a larger space. The smaller spaces shown in either the 1941 or 1960 layouts would not do.
2. What is your 5-year plan? We have been established for 80-years and don't plan to go anywhere.
3. Is there potential that you would outgrow your space? Operationally, we don't foresee outgrowing the space but our membership may grow beyond the capacity of the larger areas at Douglass.
4. How does your work fit in with the Commemorative Committee objectives? We have an open-door policy and would be delighted to share historical information and provide docent services. The President's office and organization documents would need to be locked. NAACP would like to collaborate with the other shareholders to tell the Douglass story.
5. What happens to your organization if you are not provided space? We will continue on as we have.

Questions for LCPS included:

1. What is the available access to the building after hours and protocols? LCPS partners with Loudoun County Parks & Recreation regarding evening and weekend access to the building. Access after business hours would need to be coordinated with Parks & Rec.
2. Will the groups be charged a fee? The way the policy is written now there are fees to use the building. However, staff would envision that LCPS would enter into an MOU with each group regarding fees, tours, etc., and that through the MOU fees could be waived.
3. Can any group have a key to the front door? No. If space is dedicated it would only be available when the building is open to the public from 9-5, or as scheduled through the PR&CS building use calendar.

4. If the organizations were provided space would they be allowed to construct walls and install cubicals in these rooms? This would have to be addressed in the MOU but we would hope not.
5. Will the decisions by this School Board carry forward forever or is it subject to change? The length of the agreements would be addressed in the MOU's which typically are reviewed every 5-10 years. What future leaders decide for the building is not something we can determine. The best way to demonstrate the commitment by the School Board is by the decisions being made and by the investment that is being made to this building.

The Commemorative Committee then discussed the order of the Agenda. After discussion as to the current order, i.e. building layout before building use, the Co-Chairs changed the order of the agenda items.

### **Building Use:**

Gladys Burke made the following motion which was seconded by Larry Roeder:

*I move that the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee recommend to the School Board, in no particular order, that dedicated office space be provided to the Edwin Washington Project (EWP), Loudoun Douglass Alumni Association (LDAA) and the NAACP Loudoun Branch.*

Valerie Bush, provided an alternative motion:

*I move that the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee not offer a recommendation to the School Board and allow LCPS to make the decision.*

After discussion on the motion, and lack of a second, the motion failed.

A roll call was taken for the original motion brought forward by Gladys Burke:

Charles Avery – yes; Erica Bush – Abstain; Dwight Brooks – Yes; Gladys Burke – Yes; Valerie Bush – No; Tammy Carter – Abstain; Carlotta Coates – Abstain; Gert Evans – Yes; Joyce Jackson – Yes; Mary Randolph – Yes; Jim Roberts – Yes; Larry Roeder – Yes; Larry Simms – Yes; Sylvia Smith – Yes; Michelle Thomas – Yes.

Motion passed 11-1-3 with Margaret Good and Glory Howard absent for the vote.

### **Layout:**

Michelle Thomas made the following motion, seconded by Larry Roeder:

*I move that the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee recommend to the School Board that the 1941 Historic Section rooms be restored to the 1941 layout of 6 spaces off the main room – 2 large and 1 small on each side.*

Discussion on the motion included the fact that the 1960 layout provided more options for use, while others felt the preservation should take preference with the 1941 layout.

A roll call was taken for the motion brought forward by Michelle Thomas:

Charles Avery – yes; Erica Bush – Yes; Dwight Brooks – Yes; Gladys Burke – Yes; Valerie Bush – Yes; Tammy Carter – Yes; Carlotta Coates – Yes; Gert Evans – Yes; Joyce Jackson – Yes; Mary Randolph – Yes; Jim Roberts – Yes; Larry Roeder – Yes; Larry Simms – Yes; Sylvia Smith – Yes; Michelle Thomas – Yes.

Motion passed 15-0 with Margaret Good and Glory Howard absent for the vote.

Douglass High School Commemorative Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
August 23, 2021

The name to appear on the monument sign and on the building was tabled until the September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

S:\Planning\Donna's Folder\DOUGLASS\Commemorative Committee Info\Meeting Agendas and Minutes\Aug 23 2021 DHSCC Meeting Minutes (v1).docx