

Douglass High School Commemorative Committee

Location: Frederick Douglass Elementary School Library

MEETING MINUTES

August 9, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

APPROVED

ATTENDEES:

Committee Members: Charles Avery, Dwight Brooks, Gladys Burke, Tammy Carter, Carlotta Coates, Gertrude Evans, Margaret Good, Glory Howard, Joyce Jackson, Mary Randolph, James Roberts, Larry Roeder, Larry Simms, Sylvia Smith,

Absent: Erica Bush, Valerie Bush, Michelle Thomas

Guests: Helen Avery, Janet Wiggins

LCPS Staff: Kevin Lewis, Lottie Spurlock, Bev Tate, Charisse Rosario, John Lody, Alexis Duffin, Jennifer Ferrance, Sara Howard-O'Brien, Donna Torraca,

**Loudoun County
Parks & Rec** Steve Torpy, Rameir Martin

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 July 26, 2021 meeting. No revisions were offered.

Steve Torpy, Director Loudoun County Parks & Recreation and Rameir Martin, Community Center Manager provided the County's vision for the use of the Douglass facility in continuation of current programs and the potential for additional programs.

Questions from the Committee included:

1. Will there be groups that would have priority use of the facility?

LCPS will provide an overview and lead on group priorities. Parks & Rec will then schedule those priority groups and other uses around those priorities.

2. Is the Shop Building included in the Parks & Rec program?

The building can be commonly used, possibly in the evenings.

3. Would the stakeholder groups in the room (LDAA, NAACP and EWP) be considered a part of the program?

There will be an MOU with the groups and LCPS regarding the use of the facility. Kevin explained that Parks & Rec does not have space in the front portion of the building but will assist in facilitating the uses in that space, along with other spaces on the campus.

Charisse Rosario, LCPS EL Director, introduced herself and her team. (Further detail on the programs can be found in the attachments to the meeting agenda)

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Jennifer Ferrance, Welcome Center Supervisor, explained what the Welcome Center does, number of students and families they serve, and what uses might occur in the front of the building during the day and some evenings.

Alexis Duffin spoke about the Head Start and Step Programs, number of students they work with in the County, and uses hoped for in the front area during the day and some evenings. Alexis also spoke about some community partnerships they have including Loudoun Literacy.

John Lody, Director of Diagnostics & Prevention Services with the Child Find Center explained the program services and their daily needs.

Comments and discussion from the Committee included:

1. What will the reception area look like? It is still in design, but it will be movable so that the front central space can be used unencumbered for a variety events.
2. Will there be any opportunity for the community to use the front of the building during the day? There needs to be a plan on how to manage the daytime use of the front portion of the building.
3. How will the Committee commemorate the inside space with the need for a coordination of uses? Some members expressed that this was a public facility and not a museum. Some felt that, with dedicated space, there could be scheduled times when tours could occur with a docent available to explain the history of Douglass. Tours could possibly be held on a designated day on weekends and/or during the week. Specific times could be set for visitors.
4. What will draw folks to the facility? Need to commemorate in a way that would invite people to visit.
5. How can the three groups work together? Would they be willing to dedicate a certain amount of time to lead tours and meet with the public?
6. Some felt this was an opportunity to show how special the school is. It is an opportunity for historical tourism.
7. Someone asked how the three groups could work together cohesively to tell the story?
8. EWP stated that they have many artifacts they could display at the school. Offered that the building can be both, partly museum and research center and a service facility. There is a powerful connection to the civil rights movement with the history of the school. There are many things people would want to see if they knew they existed.
9. Should the space be open for all to use and not dedicated to specific non-LCPS or non-County uses?

The Committee went on to review the current list of questions for the stakeholders. In addition to the six questions provided in the packet additions included:

1. What is anticipated use of the space, i.e. number of days in the week, number of hours, time of day)?
2. How many people each day are anticipated in the building by the group?
3. How do you plan to utilize your space with everything else that is going on in the building?

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4. Would the groups be willing to work together to provide tours and information about the building to visitors?
5. How could the three groups work together as a cohesive unit to tell the story?

Mr. Simms shared his vision for the oral history project and his work to date on interviews. He is focusing on Leesburg/Western Loudoun/Middleburg with those who graduated or attended Douglass High School. He hopes to interview 6 people (2 from 1940's, 2 from 1950's and 2 from 1960's) and then incorporate those interviews into a touchscreen similar to what is in place at Frederick Douglass ES.

Sara explained that LCPS is reaching out to videographers to engage someone to interview teachers, staff, and students of Douglass. LCPS would like the Committee's help in identifying people who can be interviewed and providing any contact information that might be available. Ms. Wiggins mentioned Charles Hankerson who was listed on the potential names in the packet and may have contact information for him. The Committee was asked to think about others that could be interviewed and submit those names by email or bring to a meeting. The email address is: DouglassRenovation@LCPS.org

Donna Torraca reviewed various slides of sculpture from around the country that depict the struggle for black education, samples of Frederick Douglass Busts and various mural ideas for consideration by the Committee. (Note: Frederick Douglass spoke in Purcellville, VA on September 11, 1879 – see attached article. Born in 1818 he would have been 61). No decisions were made with regard to the mural or bust but rather the presentation was for the Committee to think about what they would like to see done at Douglass. It was noted that a statue of a sitting Frederick Douglass would be a tourism attraction as people love taking photos with these types of statues. Committee members discussed the need to identify the concept to include (honoring the Countywide League/NAACP, where to place the murals (on outside of shop building, in the gym as options)

Tammy Carter stated that she had put together her ideas for the outside of the building and she will try to resend later this week.

The Committee reviewed the suggested names from prior meetings for the facilities monument sign and the possibility to place a name in the peak of the roof of the building which would provide an additional naming opportunity. Douglass Educational Center was offered as an additional option for the monument sign. Removal of the word “formerly” and stating “Douglass High School 1941-1968” in the peak of the roof was extensively discussed. It was confirmed that there could be a name on the building (such as Douglass High School with the years, and a separate monument sign. It was generally noted that whatever name is selected it should include “Douglass”. No decisions were made. Charles stated the group would vote on the name of the facility at the next meeting. It was recommended that the Committee first vote on the idea to put “Douglass High School 1941-1968” in the peak of the roof and then follow with the discussion on the name for the monument sign.

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