Douglass High School Timeline of Events

Outside

An Outside Timeline could highlight certain important facts/events. Formation and Members of County-Wide League can be located in the amphitheater area. Highway marker should include background to include the struggle years and opening of Douglass High School.
Inside

An inside timeline will best tell the full story. There should not be a lot of text to read. Shown are some samples provided by the Architects of different displays. The inside timeline should include images, to catch the readers eye.
The Struggle

• In 1931 a delegation of parents and patrons met with the School Board to ask for a new school building and additional teachers for Black students. The Board voted against it. The parents did not give up but continued to pursue the issue and keep the School Board aware of the conditions at the Loudoun Training School.

• For years delegations of parents and patrons met with the School Board to request a new high school building, an expanded curriculum, and additional teachers. Action was postponed or refused on the grounds that funds were not available. In the absence of progress with an all-white county School Board, the consequence was a hardening of attitudes on both sides.

• 1937 – Will Brown is contracted to drive Black children from Purcellville, via Hamilton and Waterford, to the Leesburg School on Union Street. Busing for White children began in 1925.
• 1938 – Mrs. Alexander organized the County-Wide League, which consisted of all Parent Teacher Association throughout the County. The organization along with the PTA’s held meetings in various schools and churches making plans for securing a new high school. Mr. John Wanzer, of Middleburg was elected President. He served as President for 25 years.

• 1938 – Jeanes Supervisor Mrs. Gertrude Alexander was hired to supervise Black teachers. She worked with both parents and teachers to press School Board for a new high school. She begins her letter writing campaign for a better high school, more teacher pay for Blacks in Loudoun.
1939 – The School Board assured the Black citizens of a new school, but they had no land at this time. Every tactic was used by the power structure to discourage them, but the County-Wide League used every stone that was set before them as a steppingstone to reach their goal.

1939 – The Virginia Department of Education recommends the Leesburg School on Union Street be abandoned due to unsafe conditions. The school remains open for Black high school students until the Douglass High School is built in 1941.

1939 – The County-Wide League purchases land from W S. Gibbons to build a high school for Blacks students for $4,000. Mr. Gibbons met with the County-Wide League at night to perform the secret transaction.
• 1939 - November 4, 1939, the trustees paid $1400 as a down payment, with the balance secured by a vendor’s lien payable in ten equal installments. A month later, William Hall, an African American contractor, secured a bank loan of $2600.00 for the League enabling them to get a clear title.

• At the same time the Black community was struggling to purchase this land, the School Board used $4000 “surplus funds” to purchase land adjacent to the white school in Leesburg to be used for its future expansion.
• 1940 - The County-Wide League donates the purchased land to Loudoun County Public Schools for $1.00.
Legal Intervention

• 1940 – Mrs. Alexander on behalf of the County-Wide League, invited Chief Legal Counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to visit Loudoun, to speak to the people and to evaluate the educational system.

• 1940 – Houston suggested a Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. should be formed in Loudoun County to strengthen their forces in case legal court action would be required.
• 1940 – The local NAACP Chapter receives its charter on March 24, 1940. Marie Medley-Howard, a Leesburg beautician, becomes its first President. Because of the deplorable conditions in Loudoun and the possible need for legal action the technical leadership on the school initiative shifted from the County Wide League to the NAACP, with the League remaining as the chief fund raising and public relations arm. It encouraged citizens to pay the poll tax and to vote.
The End of an Era

1940 – The Leesburg School on Union Street graduates the last high school class with the diplomas reading, Leesburg High School.

1941 – The Loudoun Training School becomes Douglass Elementary until a new elementary school is built and opened in 1958.
Douglass High School Opens

1941 – Douglass High School Opens, with grades 8-11.

Aside from desks, the school board supplied little else. Again, the County Wide League and other members of the coalition began serious fund raising. They purchased curtains for the stage and front windows, folding chairs for the auditorium, a piano, books for the library, miscellaneous equipment, and supplies. Other items and landscaping were donated. Later, the industrial arts students built the shop as part of their class work.
• 1941 – In November 1941 Douglass High School was dedicated

• 1942 – In January 1942, Douglass High School received its certificate of accreditation for the 1941-1942 school year.
A 12th grade class was added to Douglass, but the 12th grade was added to the White high school in 1945.

The first class under the twelve-year plan graduated.

In the Fall of 1953 an addition was added to the school which consisted of a science Lab, home economics suite, plus 5 classrooms.

A gym, cafeteria, and several classrooms and new shop was built.

1949
1950
1953
1960
Integration Begins – Douglass Closes Its Doors

• 1963 – A U.S. federal court ordered Loudoun County to comply with the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision to approve all applications from Black children to attend formerly all-white schools.

• 1967 – A U.S. federal court ordered Loudoun County to establish geographic attendance zones regardless of race to approve all applications from Black children to attend all-white schools.

• 1968 - The Year of Full Integration and Douglass High School graduates its last class.
JOINT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS and
SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE MEETING
ACTION ITEM

SUBJECT: Study and Reconciliation for the Operation of Segregated
Schools in Loudoun County

ELECTION DISTRICT: Countywide

STAFF CONTACTS: Kevin Lewis, LCPS, Department of Support Services
Monica Spells, County Administration
Shalom Black, County Administration

PURPOSE: To discuss the study and reconciliation for the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County; the forced sale of 8 acres of land in Leesburg on December 16, 1940, by the “County-Wide League” that conveyed land purchased for $4,000 to Loudoun County for $1 during its operation of segregated schools and to seek out ways to address that injustice; and recommendations for further actions to address the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County and the community healing that needs to occur from the ongoing impact of segregation.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff recommends that the Joint Board of Supervisors and School Board Committee (Joint Committee) recommend to the School Board and the Board of Supervisors that the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee (DHSCC) assist with the study and reconciliation considerations for the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County including the forced sale of the Douglass High School property, and report regularly to the Joint Committee on their progress. Staff further recommends that the Joint Committee recommend that the School Board amend the DHSCC mission statement to assist with the request for reconciliation considerations.

BACKGROUND: On September 25, 2020, the Loudoun County School Board (SB) and the Board of Supervisors (BOS) issued a formal statement of apology for the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County. The apology to the Black community was for “the negative impact, damage and disadvantages to Black students and families that were caused by decisions made by the Loudoun County School Board, Loudoun County Public Schools Administration, and the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors.” The apology documents a history of racist policies enacted by these entities to prevent Loudoun’s Black residents from receiving the same level of education as white residents during the operation of segregated schools.

At the BOS Business Meeting on September 21, 2021, the BOS approved Supervisor Briskman’s Board Member Initiative (BMI) (6-3: Buffington, Kershner, and Letourneau opposed) directing
At the School Board meeting on October 12, 2021, the SB approved a motion (7-0-2: Barts and Hoyler abstained) to forward the item to the Joint Committee for review and discussion: “The Joint Committee, in collaboration and consultation with the community, will provide recommendations for further actions to address the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County and the community healing that needs to occur from the ongoing impact of segregation. Collaboration with community groups will include groups that widely represent the Black citizens of Loudoun County.”

At their November 1, 2021 meeting, the Joint Committee discussed potential steps the BOS and SB could take to reconcile past injustices and disparities associated with the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County. Consensus of the Joint Committee (5-0-1: Glass absent) requested staff to:

- Reach out to the SB-appointed DHSCC to determine interest in forming a subcommittee to work further on this topic; and
- Provide information and links to the Joint Committee regarding the background, mission and outcomes of the DHSCC work thus far.

The Joint Committee further agreed that if the BOS and SB wished to assign the study to the DHSCC, the scope of the DHSCC would need to be changed to add this task with a deadline imposed.

The DHSCC subsequently reviewed the request of the Joint Committee, specifically regarding interest to assist with recommendations for reconciliation of the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County as well as the forced sale of Douglass High School. At the December 13, 2021 DHSCC meeting, the DHSCC voted (14-0-3: Carter, Jackson and Randolph absent) to accept the invitation of the Joint Committee:

The DHSCC accepts the invitation of the Joint Committee to assist with the request for recommendations on the reconciliation for the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County and the forced sale of the Douglass High School property. The DHSCC proposes to provide a status update and recommendations to the Joint Committee within six months of being designated to participate. If designated, DHSCC would form a subcommittee which will allow work on the Joint Committee’s request simultaneously with the commemorative effort. Recommendations on commemoration are also proposed within the six-month timeframe.
In providing a quarterly update to the School Board on January 11, 2022, the DHSCC co-chairs also reported on the Committee’s discussion and acceptance of the potential request of the Joint Committee.

The Douglass High School Commemorative Committee was appointed by the Loudoun County School Board on May 11, 2021. The current charge of the Committee is to develop options, both permanent and temporary, to be incorporated in the renovation of the Douglass High School building. The Committee considers relevant historic artifacts, memorabilia, and other possible interpretive building displays to tell the story of Douglass High School. The Committee’s mission is to determine how the history and importance of Douglass High School should be shared and to recommend commemorative components for School Board action and funding, as necessary. The Douglass High School Committee is currently comprised of the following community representatives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Douglass High School Commemorative Committee</th>
<th>Representing Stakeholder Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Roberts</td>
<td>Black History Committee of the Friends of Thomas Balch Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Roeder</td>
<td>Edwin Washington Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys Burke</td>
<td>Loudoun County Heritage Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Avery</td>
<td>Loudoun Douglass Alumni Association*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica Bush</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Good</td>
<td>Loudoun Preservation Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy Carter</td>
<td>MLK ‘I Have A Dream’ Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Thomas</td>
<td>NAACP - Loudoun Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Randolph</td>
<td>Citizen At-Large, Leesburg Town Council Appointee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlotta Coates</td>
<td>Citizen At-Large, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Appointee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwight Brooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie Bush</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertrude Evans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glory Howard</td>
<td>Citizens At-Large, Loudoun County School Board Appointees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce Jackson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Simms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The two representatives from the Loudoun Douglass Alumni Association serve as Co-Chairs of the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee.*
**ISSUES:** The SB, with direction from the Joint Committee, is prepared to take action endorsing the DHSCC to assist with this project and amend the current mission of the DHSCC, as noted here in italic font:

The Loudoun County School Board appoint the DHSCC [as outlined in the May 11, 2021, item] to determine how the history and importance of Douglass High School should be shared and to recommend commemorative components for School Board action. *And, subject to the appointment and approval of the Board of Supervisors, assist with the request for recommendations on the reconciliation for the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County and the forced sale of the Douglass High School property.*

Direction from the Joint Committee is needed to determine the next steps for the study.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The fiscal impact is not known at this time. Any allocation of funds will require future Board of Supervisors approval.

**ALTERNATIVES:**
1. The Joint Committee may proceed as described in the February 7, 2022 Action Item with or without modification.
2. Staff understands that a member of the Committee may wish to offer another alternative to create an independent task force. The Joint Committee may choose to determine a different structure for an independent task force to study the issue of reconciliation for segregated schools and may choose to recommend approval of the new task force to the SB and BOS.
3. The Joint Committee may choose to recommend that the SB and BOS discontinue the study of this issue.

**DRAFT MOTIONS:**

1. I move that the Joint Board of Supervisors and School Board Committee recommend to the School Board and the Board of Supervisors that the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee assist with the study and reconciliation considerations for the operation of segregated schools in Loudoun County including the forced sale of the Douglass High School property, and report regularly to the Joint Committee on their progress.

   I further move that the Joint Board of Supervisors and School Board Committee recommend that the School Board amend the Douglass High School Commemorative Committee mission statement, as proposed in the February 7, 2022, Joint Board of Supervisors and School Board Committee Action Item 2, to assist with the request for reconciliation considerations.

   **OR**

2. I move an alternate motion.