

# Douglass High School Commemorative Committee

Location: Frederick Douglass Elementary School Library

## MEETING MINUTES

July 12, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

**APPROVED**

### ATTENDEES:

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

**Absent:** Michelle Thomas

**Guests:** Nathan Bailey, Helen Avery

**LCPS Staff:** Bev Tate, Sara Howard-O'Brien, Donna Torraca

Charles Avery welcomed the group and began by sharing memories of his, including 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations and the LDAA Annual Picnic. He shared with the group that they were creating history and making history. He invited guests to introduce themselves. Helen Avery, who attended the last meeting, said hello. Nathan Bailey, a volunteer with the Edwin Washington Project, introduced himself and stated his focus has been on the history of transportation for blacks in Virginia.

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the June 28, 2021 meeting which included additions provided by Gert Evans. Tammy Carter had one additional clarification for revision. Larry Simms made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Tammy Carter seconded.

Charles introduced Larry Roeder who gave a brief overview of the history of black education prior to 1941. Larry explained the timeline of white and black high school education including classes that black students had access to. In addition, he discussed the high school history of the Leesburg Training School. (A copy of his presentation is attached.) Mary Randolph asked if the Edwin Washington Project had any information regarding the students who went to the Jennie Dean School in Manassas, as her mother attended that school; Larry said he did. Larry Sims asked how permission was given to teach the upper branch classes; Larry stated that each magisterial district had its own school board and teachers would have to ask permission from that local board. He also offered to share an advance draft of a book he and Gert Evans are working on (within the Edwin Washington Project) with any interested Committee members.

Charles stated that it would be good to capture information on the inside of the school regarding who was on the School Board when the property was accepted from the black community and who the members of the Countywide League were. He questioned if any of these persons were still alive.

Before breaking out into the subcommittee groups, Sara provided a reminder that the areas for the amphitheater and plaza area have been marked on the pavement and grass at Douglass High

School, in pink spray paint. She encouraged Committee members to stop by the site to get a sense of the area available for these commemorative spaces.

Charles asked both the Inside and Outside Subcommittee review and compare the Stakeholder commemorative suggestions with the Commemorative Committee suggestions to see if there were any other items they wished to add to their respective lists for consideration.

After a short break and breakout sessions the groups came back together for a recap of their individual discussions:

### **INSIDE COMMITTEE:**

Carlotta Coates provided an overview of the Inside Committees discussions. At the last meeting, the Inside Committee suggested pictures of the graduating seniors but after further discussion they are now considering a movable video kiosk that patrons to the building could use to search for photographs (and information?) on Douglass High School students and staff members.

The group also discussed:

- Purchasing a dollar bill from 1941 to display.
- Inside timeline with information of years prior to 1941 and shortly after 1968
- Mural possibly by a local artist
- Diorama of Leesburg during years of Douglass High School (Available yearbooks, which were printed from 1953 until 1968, have local businesses that supported the school) This yearbook information could also be used to document local history and acknowledge the businesses.
- Bust of Frederick Douglass
- Memorabilia throughout the building
- Name each room in the building after teachers, staff, etc. Additionally, discussion included possible plaques inside each original classroom listing all the teachers who taught in the individual classroom during 1941-1968 period.

Mr. Simms has reached out to several individuals who attended Douglass High School. He is interviewing and recording to create both an example of how this could be done for a commemorative concept and a historical record.

The Inside Committee also spent a portion of time talking about what the building should be named. In naming the school, many members stated that the school signage should say 'Douglass High School' or 'Douglass' but no reference to 'Former' or using 'Center' should be included in the building name. [Note: A suggestion was made that each Committee member could individually provide a recommendation for the name for full Committee consideration.]

### **OUTSIDE COMMITTEE:**

Tammy Carter provided an overview of the Outside Committee discussions, after reviewing and comparing both the Stakeholders Commemorative Recommendations and the Commemorative Committee Recommendations:

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- All items listed in the Commemorative Committee Recommendations Chart remain as suggestions from the Outside group.
- A walk-through-history that would provide a timeline would be of interest
- The group questioned whether a mural on the wall near the outside basketball court would be a good idea and if it would invite graffiti and vandalism. They asked for clarification if the basketball court would be surrounded by a fence
- Potential for a bench of Frederick Douglass sitting on it either inside or outside
- What could the amphitheater be used for? Could it also be a meeting space?
- Naming the building and the campus was discussed with a recommendation to provide 'Formerly Douglass High School 1941-1968' at the peak of the building, regardless of what the monument sign name is determined to be
- Discussion regarding classes dedicating items to the school

Charles notified that Thomas Balch Library has invited the Committee to provide a display on Douglass High School in 2022. LCPS will chose the month for the display and a sub-committee will work on items for inclusion in the display.

There was a reminder that the Committee is looking for commemorative items and to please bring them to the meeting. In reference to the Outside Committee, there was discussion regarding class dedications. The Committee was asked to reach out to past graduates about items that other classes had dedicated. As an example, the flagpole in front school that was dedicated by the Class of 1960.

The group discussed the benefit of the architect attending a future meeting; August was suggested, but no specific date chosen. This will be discussed further at the July 26 meeting, along with an adjustment to the schedule around the holidays.

Mary Randolph asked what the timeline was for the project. Sara advised that construction in the back portion of the building will begin first, with completion targeted for fall 2022. There is currently no set start date for renovation work to begin in the 1941 portion of the school. Renovation on the 1941 portion of the building will not begin until the Commemorative Committee is ready with the commemorative ideas so to avoid any conflict with construction work.

Charles closed the meeting by asking everyone to think about the message the Committee wants to give to visitors - what they want them to see, hear and feel.