



5/31 MEMORIAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES ~ JULY 2022

Day 1: March 30, 2022, 4 – 8 p.m.

Location: The HIVE, 4636 Columbus Street, Virginia Beach, VA 23462

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: William Almond, Michael Berlocchi (Council liaison), Sharon Felton, Kurtis Hooks, Cosette Livas, Jason Nixon, Tara Reel, Brian Ricardo, Shelby Slutzker (ex officio), Sylvia Strickland, Sabrina Wooten (Council liaison), Charlotte Zito

EXCUSED ABSENCE: George Alcaraz, Ervin Cox, Lawrence “Duff” Kliewer

Dr. Larry Schooler, 5/31 Memorial Committee Facilitator, opened the meeting by reading the names of the victims of the 5/31 tragedy.



We remember

- LaQuita C. Brown
- Ryan Keith Cox
- Tara Welch Gallagher
- Mary Louise “Mary Lou” Crutsinger Gayle
- Alexander Mikhail Gusev
- Joshua O. Hardy
- Michelle “Missy” Langer
- Richard H. Nettleton
- Katherine A. Lusich Nixon
- Christopher Kelly Rapp
- Herbert “Bert” Snelling
- Robert “Bobby” Williams

Dr. Schooler then reviewed the 5/31 Memorial Committee meeting objectives and discussion agreements the Committee agreed to last month. The Committee concurred those remained valid and useful. He also previewed the plan for this month's meeting.

Our Objectives

- Build trust, cultivate relationships, and understand each other's perspectives.
- Consider needs and wants of potential visitors to the future 5/31 memorial.
- Discuss memorial site criteria and considerations and visit potential sites.

Proposed Discussion Agreements

- **Open-mindedness:** Listen to and respect all points of view.
- **Acceptance:** Suspend judgment as best you can.
- **Curiosity:** Seek to understand rather than persuade.
- **Discovery:** Question old assumptions, look for new insights.
- **Sincerity:** Speak for yourself about what has personal heart and meaning.
- **Brevity:** Go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.
- **Others?**



Dr. Schooler reviewed with the Committee the work they accomplished in February, specifically recapping feelings and thoughts they had about memorials they had seen or visited, and what they considered to be the purpose of such memorials and the messages conveyed.

Meeting 1 Recap

What do you remember feeling or thinking at memorials you have visited or seen?

FEELINGS

- Calm
- Peaceful
- Healing
- Meditative
- Hurt
- Clarity
- Connection to those memorialized
- Curiosity
- Inspiration
- Educational
- Perspective
- Small and humbled
- Gratitude
- Confusion
- Remembrance
- Emotional – loss and grief

THOUGHTS

- Quiet reflective place
- Contemplation
- Abstraction
- Simplicity and impact
- Opportunity to learn
- Ability to touch, read, walk
- Importance of the story told
- Continuing legacy
- Reminder that life is precious
- Importance of space and place

Purpose of Memorials and Monuments

- Celebrate
- Remember
- Heal
- Connect
- Share a story
- Recognize survivors
- Place to pause
- Sympathy and love
- Accessibility
- Physical architecture
- Abstraction
- Reflection
- Capturing time and legacy
- Bringing the community together
- Gathering spot
- Honor
- Sharing stories
- Education
- Generational
- Sense of moving forward
- Continued awareness

Messages Conveyed by Memorials

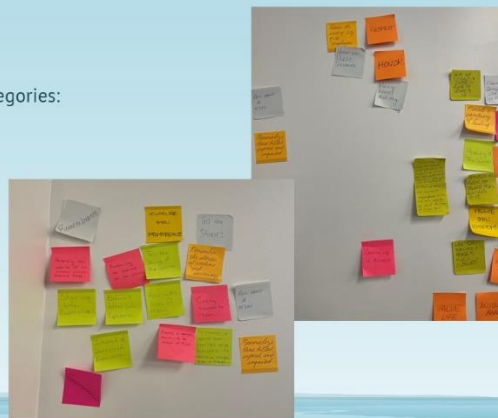
- Deliver what took place
- Resilient community
- Reflection of all
- Reflect untold stories
- Tribute that honors each story
- Honoring the work and service of the individuals impacted
- Reclaiming the event
- Self-identity
- Unity
- Legacy
- Authenticity
- For the next generation

Dr. Schooler facilitated a discussion of the goals specific to this memorial, with the Committee members working in small groups, with specific focus areas of remembrance, honoring those impacted, and healing.

Goals Exercise

Goals broken into thematic categories:

- Remembrance
- Honoring those impacted
- Healing

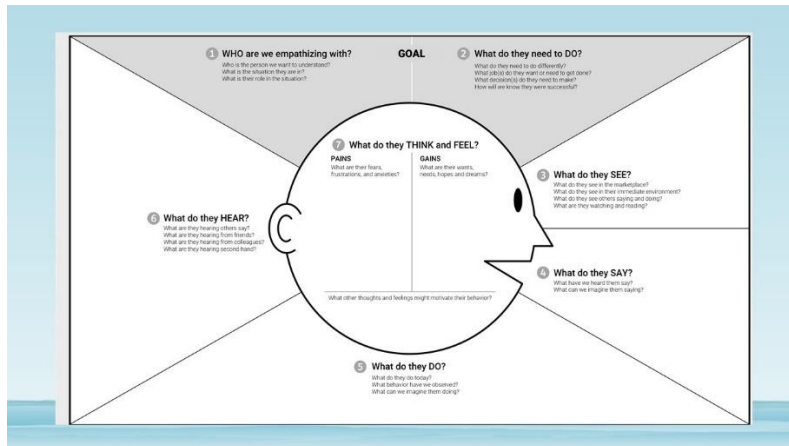
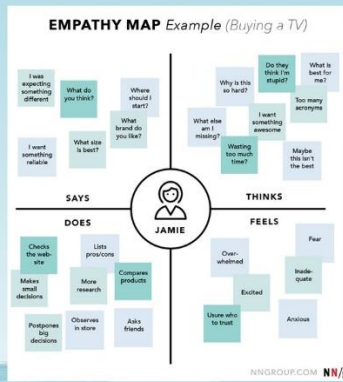


Dr. Schooler introduced a Personas exercise where Committee members would put themselves in the shoes of another person who may experience this memorial. Each Committee member brings their unique perspective to the group, but is here to make decisions on behalf of an entire community, so the goal of this exercise was to try to identify with the various publics served by this memorial to more fully represent the community as a whole with empathy and awareness of various perspectives.

- Personas Exercise
 - Student
 - Introverted; don't want to talk about it; worried about people being around; need to feel safe (maybe around trees or water)
 - Educator
 - Feel curiosity, perspective, impact (emotional)
 - Experience the story being told but considering how they might communicate such a large event in a digestible way to students
 - Want the memorial to represent resilience
 - Visitor
 - Want to know what happened but leaving needing to know more
 - Don't want to visit somewhere like the boardwalk
 - Want to move through the memorial independently
 - Want something to contribute (candle, donation, etc.)
 - Important it's easy to find, accessible
 - Want to be educated about what happened
 - Think of it as a trail or something you experience
 - Needs to evoke empathy
 - Want to leave feeling love, hope
 - May want to experience through passage or photography
 - Want to leave inspired
 - Need to consider national/international experience
 - Community member
 - Family member
 - Accessibility is important
 - City staff
 - Things member has heard from City employees:
 - Need to distance from Bldg. 2
 - Need to stay away from using "5/31" in the name
 - Another member added that he thinks it's important "5/31" be the name of the memorial
 - Other notes/themes:
 - Kiosk to track who's visiting
 - Open but connected to an urban area

Personas Exercise

Understanding who will visit the memorial



People to Consider

Choose one persona and answer questions as if you are that person

Victim's Relative

- How would you like the memorial space to feel?

Survivors

- What would you like to experience at this memorial space?

City staff

- How would you like to interact with the memorial?

Community members

- What would you like the memorial to emphasize?

Visitors (outside VB)

- What do you want the memorial to say/represent about Virginia Beach?

Students / Children

Educators/Researchers

Dr. Schooler guided the Committee members to draw on what resonated with them in the Personas exercise to inform their conversation on community engagement, posing the following questions and topics:

Community Engagement

5/31 Memorial Community Engagement

Who do we want to engage?

- Families
- Community members
- City staff
- Students
- Others?

What do we want to know from them?

- What they want to feel, think, and/or learn at the memorial
- Vision for memorial
- Elements
- Site preferences
- Others?

Methods for Community Engagement Cont.

- Listening sessions / small group discussions / focus groups
 - Can be by invitation, open to public, or both
- Public workshop
 - Can include stations with info and specific questions
 - Can include virtual options
- Televised community conversation
 - Can include dial-out to homes in VB
 - Can include simulcast in multiple languages
- Online survey/discussion board (via PublicInput or other platform)
- Others?
- “Meeting in a Box” for community organizations
- “Pop up” engagement at events

Following the dinner break, Dr. Schooler transitioned discussion to the site selection process. He reminded the group of the discussions they had in February when looking at other memorials, and then facilitated discussion on site criteria. Again, the Committee broke into small groups to allow greater collaborative discussion.

Site Criteria

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

5/31 Memorial Site: Potential Evaluation Criteria

- How important do you feel it is that the permanent memorial be on City-owned land?
- How important do you feel proximity to Building 2 is for the permanent memorial?
- At what scale do you envision the memorial?

5/31 Memorial Site: Potential Evaluation Criteria

- Do you envision the memorial outdoors or indoors?
- How important is physical and visual accessibility to the permanent memorial?
- How important is it for the site to be “shovel ready” for the construction of the memorial?

5/31 Memorial Site: Potential Questions to Consider

How does the site feel, especially in relation to feelings you want to evoke:

- Calm, tranquility
- Hurt, loss, grief
- Clarity
- Curiosity
- Inspiration
- Humility
- Gratitude
- Confusion

To what extent does the space allow for:

- Quiet reflection, contemplation
- An opportunity to learn
- Abstraction
- Ability to touch, read, and walk

5/31 Memorial Site: Potential Questions to Consider

- To what extent does the site help meet goals of:
 - Remembrance
 - Honoring those impacted
 - Healing
- What's around the site and how will a memorial affect the space?
- What site features do you like or dislike?

City staff members Mr. Tom Nicholas, PE, facilities engineer, and Ms. Emily Archer, project manager who has served as senior planner and urban designer, walked Committee members through a series of City-owned properties that could serve as potential sites, and detailed existing features of each, consistently expressing that any of the sites could be altered to suit any decided upon needs for the memorial. The Committee would physically visit all sites the following day, so this overview was to prepare members for those visits

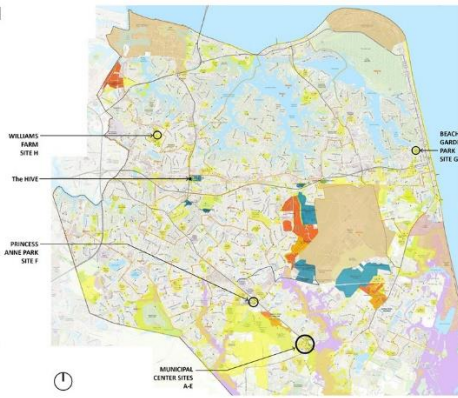
Preview of Potential Sites

Potential Memorial Sites Tour

The NIVE
150 Independence Blvd
Virginia Beach, VA 23462

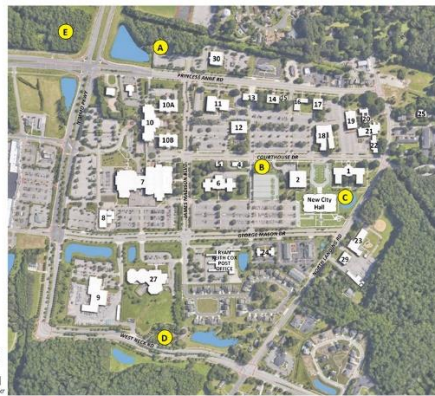
- A-4 MUNICIPAL CENTER SITES
2401 Courthouse Drive,
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
- F PRINCESS ANNE COMMONS
GATEWAY PARK SITE
3479 Dean Meek Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23463
- G BEACH GARDEN PARK SITE
2854 Kilbourne Court
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
- H WILLIAMS FARM RECREATION
CENTER SITE
5252 Learning Circle
Virginia Beach, VA 23462

- LEGEND**
- FLOODPLAINS SUBJECT TO SPECIAL RESTRICTIONS
 - CITY PROPERTY
 - CITY PARK SITES
 - INDUSTRIAL/BUSINESS PARKS - PUBLIC
 - INDUSTRIAL/BUSINESS PARKS - PRIVATE



Municipal Center Potential Sites

2401 COURTHOUSE DRIVE
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23456



**Municipal Center
Potential Sites**



APPROXIMATELY 1.3 ACRES



CITY-OWNED UNDEVELOPED DRY PARCEL - 3.5 ACRES



**Municipal Center
Potential Sites**



APPROXIMATELY 0.25 ACRE



APPROXIMATELY 1.2 ACRES INCLUSIVE OF POND



**Municipal Center
Potential Sites**



APPROXIMATELY 1.6 ACRES



**Princess Anne Commons
Gateway Park**

3470 DAM NECK ROAD
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23453
APPROXIMATELY 3.3 ACRES



Beach Garden Park

2854 KILBOURNE COURT,
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23451
APPROXIMATELY 0.5 ACRE



**Williams Farm
Recreation Center**

5252 LEARNING CIRCLE
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23462
APPROXIMATELY 1.25 ACRES



Dr. Schooler closed the meeting by giving a preview of the Day 2 agenda.

Day 2 Preview

- Meet at the entrance of the Westin between 2 – 2:30 p.m.
- Wear comfortable clothing and walking shoes
- Bring something with which to take notes; discussion/Q&A is only permitted if we are outside of the van
- Prepare for potential inclement weather
- Be aware that the media will attend the tour; this is a public mtg

Day 2: March 31, 2022, 2:30 – 7 p.m.

Location: Meet at the entrance to the Westin for a driving tour of site prospects & conclude at The HIVE, 4636 Columbus Street, Virginia Beach, VA 23462

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: George Alcaraz, William Almond, Michael Berlucchi (Council liaison), Sharon Felton, Kurtis Hooks, Cossette Livas, Jason Nixon, Tara Reel, Brian Ricardo, Shelby Slutzker (ex officio), Sylvia Strickland, Sabrina Wooten (Council liaison), Charlotte Zito

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Ervin Cox, Lawrence "Duff" Kliever

Two busses – one for Committee members, and a second for accompanying staff – caravanned to eight sites, five of which were at the Municipal Center, one at Princess Anne Commons Gateway Park, one at Beach Garden Park and one adjacent to Williams Farm Recreation Center. No discussions about the sites took place on the bus. While members were permitted to converse with one another and ask questions on site, the group reconvened at The HIVE following the tour to share their impressions and provide their thoughts on the sites visited and other options.

As is the Committee's custom, Larry Schooler, 5/31 Memorial Committee Facilitator, opened the meeting at The HIVE by reading the names of the victims of the 5/31 tragedy. He then opened the floor for discussion.

Some members asked whether non-City-owned land was a possibility, whether private donors had been approached and if state land were a possibility. City staff indicated there had been no direction to narrow site locations or funding sources at this time, and any idea brought forth could be considered.

Multiple members expressed a preference for a site at or near the Municipal Center. One member noted, "The heart of this is at the Municipal Center."

Site A – located near the intersection of Princess Anne Road and Nimmo Parkway, near a retention pond with Building 30 (where the 911 dispatch center is located) and the old Kellam High School (still owned by Virginia Beach City Public Schools, but not in use) are adjacent to this site (approx. 1.3 acres)

- Several members expressed a preference for this site as it had a built-in water feature and electricity, is at the Municipal Center, but not directly at Building 2, as some people may have trouble returning to the actual site of the tragedy.
- Some noted this site allows for creativity, and also is at a visible intersection, so it would be easy for people to find.
- There was concern about potential noise, whether from the school if students return there, or from the street. Others felt that could be mitigated.

Site B – located near Building 2 at the intersection of Courthouse Dr and Mattaponi Road (approx.. 0.25 acre)

- One member was very drawn to this site. The proximity to the building where the tragedy occurred was powerful.
- Universal sentiment that it was too small as a primary memorial site.

Site C – located next to the new City Hall (behind the old City Hall) at North Landing Road and George Mason Drive, where there is a retention pond (approx. 1.2 acres inclusive of pond)

- This site was not the first choice of anyone, but it was not an absolute "no," like some of the other sites.
- Concerns re. parking and traffic noise and visibility – no privacy.

Site D – located on West Neck Road , behind the Juvenile Detention Center, not far from the Ryan Keith Cox Post Office, Municipal Center Recycling Center Drop Off, and James Madison Blvd./Brewer Arch (approx.. 1.6 acres)

- Several members indicated this site spoke to them, they felt moved by it, thanks in part to 12 trees ringing the site, the quiet tranquility, and the close proximity to Building 2 without it being at Building 2.
- One member was concerned that a memorial might violate the space at site D, noting 5/31 was already destructive in this area.

Site E – a completely undeveloped corner at Nimmo Parkway and Princess Anne Road (approx. 3.5 acres)

- Possibilities here are endless, yet cost for this site would be higher, as it would need to be cleared and there is no existing infrastructure or features.

Site F – park is located at 3470 Dam Neck Road, specific parcel is bordered by Glenn Mitchell Drive and Medical Parkway (approx. 1.3 acres)

- The Committee did not feel any of the sites visited that were not at the Municipal Center were worthy of further consideration.

Site G – park is located at 2854 Kilbourne Court, specific parcel is to the right as entering park, from the curve to the cul-de-sac (approx. 0.5 acre)

- The Committee did not feel any of the sites visited that were not at the Municipal Center were worthy of further consideration.

Site H – Rec Center is located at 5252 Learning Circle, with specific parcel located in grassy field beside the center and parking lot, bordering Newtown Road (approx. 1.25 acres)

- The Committee did not feel any of the sites visited that were not at the Municipal Center were worthy of further consideration.

A couple members expressed support for a marker at the Oceanfront that acknowledges the tragedy and points people to a larger memorial elsewhere could be a nice touch. Perhaps some kind of pathway from the Oceanfront to the Municipal Center.

There was conversation about a small memorial at Building 2, perhaps a plaque or a small marker at Site B, and some kind of pathway between Building 2 and a larger site in the Municipal Center area (whether D or A) that could help people get between the sites, and some of the story could be told along that pathway.

There was widespread support for using City-owned land. The other preferences were sites D and A, a presence at the Oceanfront, a presence outside Building 2, and an indoor component, like inside a museum.

Upon conclusion of this conversation relating to possible sites, the Committee determined its next step would be to hear from the community, so the April meetings would be focused in that manner.

The meeting was adjourned.