

Summary of TRCHC Idea Forum, Louisburg Training Center, May 2, 2017

The forum was facilitated by Maury and Dru York, Sue Guerrant, and Harriette Sturges. In all, 21 citizens, including Louisburg Town Administrator Jonathan Franklin and Louisburg Town Council member Emma Stewart, attended. Although most attendees live in Louisburg, others reside in Centerville, Ingleside, Rocky Ford, and Youngsville.

After a brief summary of the TRCHC's accomplishments to date, Maury York asked attendees to suggest ideas for future activities. They are listed below:

Will Hinton described the spiritual quality of Depot Hill in Louisburg and suggested possible uses for this key location in the town, including a library and headquarters for the TRCHC. Noting its proximity to the river, he suggested that the site could be connected to a system of walking trails along the river.

Elizabeth Hathcock said that the buildings on Depot Hill could be used as an event space similar to the one in downtown Youngsville and, when not being used for that purpose, as a venue for pop-up markets. The complex could become a source of income for the town. Jonathan Franklin noted that the Town of Louisburg plans to use the small lot across South Main Street from the depot site as a space for people to relax while viewing the river and park below.

Bill Lord said that the Town of Louisburg should take advantage of its most important resource—the Tar River. He gave San Antonio as an example of a city that has centered its urban renewal efforts on its river. Biologically diverse and relatively clean, the Tar River at Louisburg is an untapped economic development tool.

Everett Mayo suggested that canoeing on the Tar should be promoted.

Joanne Carpenter said that river hiking trails should be developed, on both sides of the Tar River bridge.

Lucy Allen suggested that the TRCHC should undertake oral history interviews with elderly citizens on an ongoing basis. She said that further efforts should be made to provide local history resources in the public schools. Everett Mayo suggested that putting lesson plans online would improve their accessibility to teachers.

Dr. Mark La Branche and Lucy Allen advocated for developing a mini-park surrounding “Milner’s crystal spring” between East Nash Street and Johnson Street. Carolyn Marin, president of the Franklin County Historical Society, noted that her organization is also interested in a project associated with this historically important spring.

Harriette Sturges said that an effort should be made to undertake activities of interest to African Americans and Latinos. She said that students in the schools might be enlisted to help with oral history projects related to these groups.

Betsy Benning suggested that the TRCHC should undertake collaborative activities with the Tar River Land Conservancy. Focused on children; these could combine historical and nature-related activities. The Tar River and the DeHart Gardens are assets that could be put to use in this regard.

Gary Cunard urged the TRCHC to focus on fund raising through grants, foundations, and private sources. He said that a stable source of income is needed in order to carry out significant projects. He also suggested that an advisory group be formed to advise property owners on best practices as they undertake the restoration of historic properties. Lucy Allen said that transportation-related grants might be available for projects related to the depot and the river.

Maury York read three suggestions sent by e-mail by Sean and Chris Kingsley:

Louisburg needs a visitor's center for tourists; the old Franklin County jail might be a good site for it.

A program should be developed to place small markers in front of historic properties in town. These could include QR codes so that visitors could use their smart phones to learn more the properties.

Bikes could be provided so that visitors could borrow or rent them while touring the town; perhaps Walmart could donate some of these.

Bill Lord said that we need to find a "champion" (perhaps a legislator) to advocate for "our cause."

Emma Stewart expressed support for continuation of the TRCHC's lecture series; transportation might be good topic for a future series.

Al Peoples suggested having a video made on the history of Louisburg. This could be a good resource for the public schools and for promoting the town. He said that two out-of-print books (George-Anne Willard Brown's *Franklin County Sketchbook* and Vickie Mason's book on Louisburg architecture) should be reprinted. Everett Mayo said that J. D. Mayo is a young filmmaker who would be ideal for developing the video.

Following these suggestions, participants met in groups to discuss the ideas and agree on three or four priorities. A reporter from each group listed the priorities. During this time, one group noted that Randy Thomas had suggested the importance of Franklin County developing a robust local history/genealogy collection such as the one in the Granville County Library in Oxford.

The various priorities were listed on large sheets of paper, and participants used colored stickers to “vote” on their top three choices.

The priorities are ranked below:

- 1. Depot Hill and River; economic development and heritage tourism: 43 points**
- 2. Money – Finding a champion (e.g., legislator): 20 points**
- 3. Welcome center/Jail: 17 points**
- 4. Spring(s)/park: 14 points**
- 5. Genealogical study center: 13 points**
- 6. Oral history (African American, Latino, student activities): 12 points**