



## 5/31 MEMORIAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES ~ JULY 2022

**Day:** July 11, 2022, 3 pm – 9:00 pm

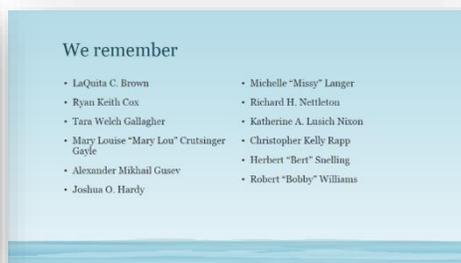
**Location:** The HIVE, 4636 Columbus Street, Virginia Beach, VA 23462

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** William Almond, Michael Berluca (Council liaison), Ervin Cox, Sharon Felton, Kurtis Hooks, Lawrence “Duff” Kliewer, Cosette Livas, Jason Nixon, Tara Reel, Brian Ricardo, Shelby Slutzker (ex officio), Sylvia Strickland, Sabrina Wooten (Council liaison), Charlotte Zito

**EXCUSED ABSENCE:** George Alcaraz

### A. WELCOME AND AGENDA REVIEW:

Kearns & West facilitator, Dr. Larry Schooler began the 5/31 Memorial Committee Meeting with a remembrance reading of the victims’ names, the reminder of why we gather and a review of the following objectives and proposed discussion agreements.



### B. REVIEW AND DEBRIEF FINDINGS FROM TAKEHOLDER INPUT SUMMARY REPORT

Dr. Schooler provided location input from the Families and Survivors and welcomed feedback from the Committee Members.

**Input from Families and Survivors**

Themes of comments collected through site criteria questionnaire, phone calls, emails, and the community survey:

Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support for a memorial in close proximity to Building 2 (<i>some concern about visiting the Municipal Center</i>)</li><li>• Mixed support for sites A and D (<i>some concern about upsetting neighbors close to site D</i>)</li><li>• Preference for an indoor memorial component to be incorporated at the location of the permanent memorial</li><li>• Support for a prominent and open memorial with the opportunity for privacy</li></ul>

Not included in the slides are the mention of painted rocks which are to be included as a memorial component.

The following input regarding the Design Elements were shared.

**Input from Families and Survivors**

Themes of comments collected through site criteria questionnaire, phone calls, emails, and the community survey:

Design Elements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong support for a water feature</li><li>• Strong support for green space</li><li>• Support to incorporate lighting features</li><li>• Support for benches or seating</li><li>• Opposition to religious symbols</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support for incorporating the names of and/or information about the victims (<i>several survivors wish to stay anonymous</i>)</li><li>• Support for a minimalist design</li></ul>

Five listening sessions were held for City staff. While all City staff were invited to participate, representatives from a total of seven (7) departments chose to do so, most of which were in Building 2. Four sessions were with only Building 2 members, and the fifth session included staff from other departments, all of whom had some connection to the incident, or who had been in Building 2 on May 31 but are not employed in one of those departments.

## Building 2 Staff Listening Sessions

The Kearns & West Facilitation Team hosted 5 listening sessions for Building 2 staff on April 27<sup>th</sup> and April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. There were attendees from the following departments:

- Public Safety/ Emergency Management
- Information Technology
- Finance
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Utilities
- Planning
- Public Works

Dr. Schooler shared participants' feedback on Location and Design elements, as well as other considerations staff conveyed in the listening sessions.

## Building 2 Staff Listening Sessions

The following themes emerged from the discussion:

### Location

- Support for a marker at or adjacent to Building 2 directing to a memorial elsewhere
- Mixed support for sites A – D (*some concern about visiting the Municipal Center and neighbors adjacent to site D*)

### Design Elements

- Strong support for a water feature
- Strong support for benches or seating
- Support for integrating painted rocks
- Desire for a minimalist design integrated with Municipal Center architecture

### Other Considerations

- Need to focus on those who died, were seriously injured, and Building 2 survivors
- Resonated with Sandy Hook and ODU memorials
- Want to engender healing and strength of the community but prefer not to use the word "resilience"

Over 400 people participated in the Community Survey, and Dr. Schooler shared the summary and figures. Over 300 individualized comments were received and will be shared with the committee.

### Community Survey Summary

	PARTICIPANTS	415
	RESPONSES	5,182
	COMMENTS	301

Question	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
To what extent do you believe the 5/31 permanent memorial should be situated at the Municipal Center complex?	81%	7%	12%
To what extent do you believe that part or all of the memorial should be situated at or adjacent to Building 2?	66%	18%	15%
To what extent do you believe that part or all of the memorial should be on City-owned land?	78%	13%	9%
To what extent do you believe that the 5/31 memorial should be partly or fully situated at the Oceanfront?	8%	12%	80%
To what extent do you believe that the 5/31 memorial should have multiple components?	36%	23%	41%

### Community Survey Summary

52% of respondents would like to see a **prominent and open memorial**, visible from the street, and 30% would like to see a **mid-sized memorial**, minimally visible from the street.

Over 300 written comments were collected, and the following themes emerged:

Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for a memorial in close proximity to Building 2</li> <li>• Support for a plaque with victim's names at Building 2</li> </ul>
Design Elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong support for a water feature</li> <li>• Strong support for green space (12 trees, gardens, forget me not flowers)</li> <li>• Support for incorporating the names of and information about the victims</li> <li>• Support for benches</li> <li>• Support for incorporating forget me not symbol</li> <li>• Support for incorporating elements of the temporary memorial (painted rocks)</li> </ul>
Other Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to prioritize feedback from families and survivors</li> <li>• Support for recognizing first responders</li> <li>• Strong support for recognizing survivors and Building 2 employees</li> <li>• Desire for the memorial to be a quiet place for reflection and healing</li> </ul>

Dr. Schooler paused and provided an opportunity for Committee member' reactions, questions, feedback or thoughts to what they heard from these stakeholders. To help guide the discussion, Dr. Schooler presented the following questions:

### Stakeholder and Community Input: Small and Full Group Discussion Questions

- How did the input the Committee received from the families and survivors thus far affect your perception of the best location for the memorial?
- How did the input from City staff thus far affect your perception of the best location for the memorial?
- How did the input from the public thus far affect your perception of the best location for the memorial?

### Stakeholder and Community Input: Small and Full Group Discussion Questions

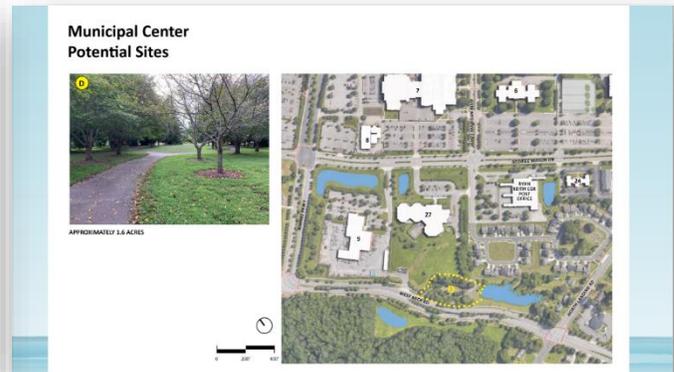
- How did the input the Committee received from families and survivors thus far affect your perception of the most important design elements for the memorial?
- How did the input the Committee received from the public thus far affect your perception of the most important design elements for the memorial?
- How did the input from City staff thus far affect your perception of the most important design elements for the memorial?

- Three significant sources of input included:
- Families and Survivors
  - City Staff
  - The General Public

**C. DISCUSS CONSENSUS AROUND MEMORIAL LOCATION (S).**

Based on the previous discussions, site tours, stakeholder feedback and independent research and conversations Committee members had with people, the members shared their site preference. The Committee was unanimously supportive of the

memorial being at one of two sites: Site A or Site D, with many specifically desiring an additional small marker at Building 2. Dr. Schooler facilitated discussion regarding Sites A and D, both located in the Municipal Center area, to see if the Committee could reach consensus on one site.



**DR. SCHOOLER'S SUMMARY:** The intent behind the presentation to City Council is to advance the committee to the phase of soliciting designers and their designs. The goal of tonight's meeting is to make clear recommendations to Council so Council can provide direction and authorization to staff to develop a Request For Qualifications that incorporates the preferences of the committee.

**Site D:** Many Committee members felt an emotional connection to this site, but there was organized opposition from the neighborhood immediately adjacent. While there were many pros to this site, several Committee members felt choosing this site when there was such opposition, including from a survivor of the tragedy, would not be in keeping with the goal of developing a respectful, serene space of honor. One member also noted that choosing a site with known opposition could also delay the process, which has already been delayed enough. Some members felt the opposition of the neighborhood was significant enough that they could not endorse this site. The City owns Site D, but the land around it is privately owned, so there is no

**Site A:** Many Committee members felt this site was well positioned to be at the Municipal Center, but outside the line of sight to Building 2, given there were comments from some staff members about how difficult it is to see the site of the tragedy. It would allow visibility from the street. One concern raised was regarding future development, specifically at the old Kellam High School site. One Committee member also is a member of the School Board. While noting she does not sit on the 5/31 Memorial Committee in that capacity, in her experience, VBCPS would be respectful of the memorial and would not be able to sell the property without approval of City Council, so it is highly unlikely that property would be developed in a manner that would not be appropriate for the sacred space of the memorial.

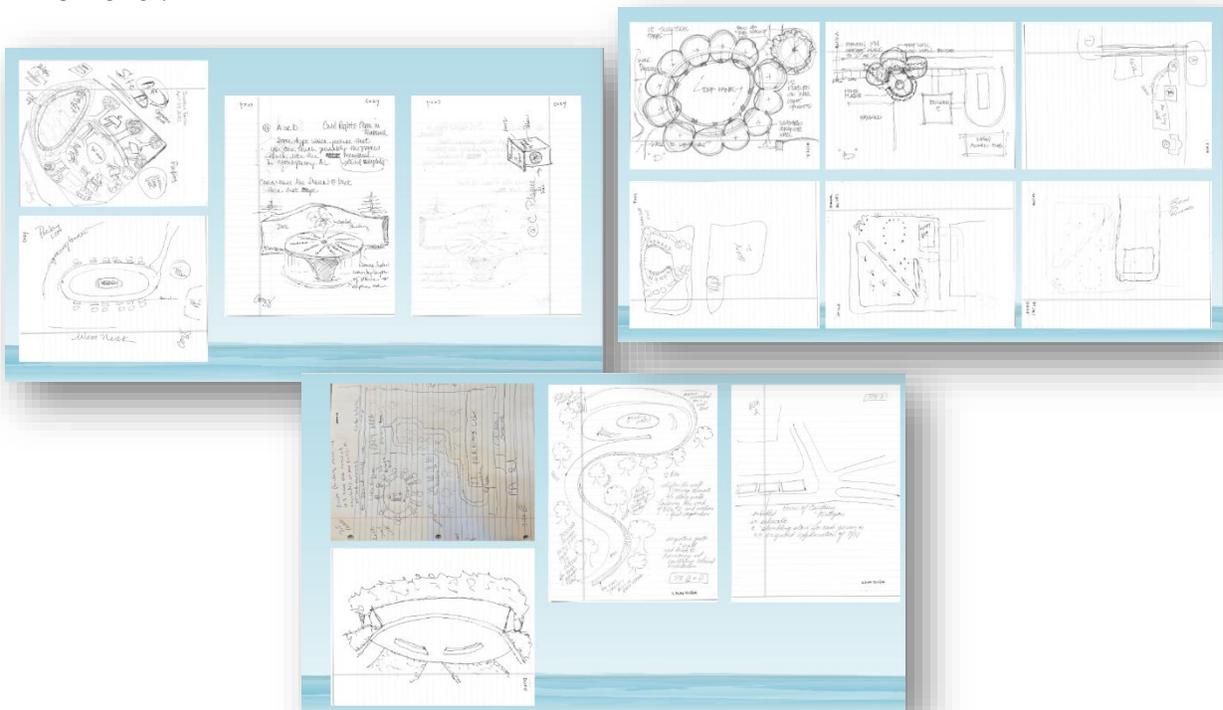
**Consensus:** Having heard the robust discussion, Dr. Schooler asked those supporting Site D if they are able to support Site A. Those in support of Site D universally expressed how the site made them feel with the trees and the water and the peace. Drawing on the experience of architects, planners and landscape designers, the group was aware that every site viewed could be modified to suit the desires for the memorial. One member noted, "You can make a D out of A." Those who were in support of Site D agreed with that assessment and there was unanimous consensus to make the recommendation to Council for Site A.

**4:15 PM: 15 MINUTE BREAK**

It was brought to Dr. Schooler's attention that Joey Zarale, a retired City employee with decades of work experience and a personal connection to the tragedy, was in attendance and asked to share his ideas for a memorial with the committee. As this is a public meeting, the Committee was open to hearing and seeing from Mr. Zarale and his colleague Chris Cahoon as a source of inspiration.

**COMMITTEE GROUP EXERCISE**

Dr. Schooler tasked the Committee to view the following sketches for observation and inspiration and come up with core elements to incorporate into the designs for the memorial.



After the exercise, Dr. Schooler framed the discussion using the following discussion questions and again instructed them to not worry about the design. The purpose is to give enough guidance to City Council so that they can approve the process to solicit for a designer to carry out the vision.

### Takeaways from the Sketch Exercise & Full Group Discussion

- What did you notice as you reviewed the sketches (e.g., common themes, something missing)
- What elements are critical to include in the primary memorial site? E.g., information about victims and survivors, areas for sitting, etc.
- What element(s) are critical for a secondary memorial site (or sites)? E.g., plaque, marker, etc.
- How would you propose people enter and exit the memorial?
- What kinds of abstractions or other original artwork best fit the memorial? E.g., statue, mural
- What types of materials do you think are best suited for the memorial? Considerations may include maintenance, durability, and aesthetics.

The committee had the following comments regarding themes and elements to the memorial site:

- Circles, fire, earth and water as a connection to Public Works and Public Utilities
- Trees, vegetation
- Notion of verticality: vertical structures and /or vertical walls
- Idea of a meditative entrance
- Open spaces for pathways for light
- Go up toward the memorial
- Way finding/ way to enter
- Physical interaction between the memorial and the water
- Water, reflection, how water is lit at night; how we deal with the water is important
- The distance from Building 2 to Site A: Make it part of the design; make the pathway safe
- Suggestion for each year on the anniversary date, close the road to traffic to make it a safe connection to reach the site.

Dr. Schooler posed the question: What is the most sensible entrance? Suggestions included:

- Using a sheltered wooded walking path and bringing in the red brick style of the municipal center; creating the curvilinear architecture of gentle curves and circles with a loop around
- Northwestern edge of the parking lot as the primary point of entry
- Entrance and exit would be the same path
- Would the main entrance come from the 25 mph road or the 45 mph road?
- The walking distance is about .4 miles one way

Dr. Schooler posed the question about what other elements are important? Suggestions included:

- That it stand out
- Opportunities for privacy; some area for reflection

Dr. Schooler posed the question about how the victims would be memorialized? Suggestions included:

- Areas for photo and engraving; simple write up of each victim
- 12 individualized structures
- Committee would take a vote if the option for photos are to be used
- Hiring the right designer with a lot of experience in this arena would have ideas on how to elegantly represent each of the victims and their backgrounds; mandating individual monuments might go to far at this point; the key is to respect each one equally and in a way that they are their own identity
- Have a design that would implement that there were 12 families
- Give the designer information from the families about the victims

**DR. SCHOOLER'S SUMMARIZATION:**

- Nature
- Water
- A walk that is significant to entering the space that encompasses the natural elements
- Something about each of the 12 individuals and any survivors who are comfortable
- Realization of the water
- Self-identity of the City

Dr. Schooler asked how the City should be represented. Suggestions included:

- City should not be over-powering; the city is only one piece of the whole puzzle
- Focus on the victims/families and not on tourism; make the story about the victims
- The image should convey strength and power without being too aggressive; need gentle healing elements in the designer's vision; for example, a trident appears to be like a weapon which can be frightening; a lighthouse shows a beacon of hope, about care and community

Dr. Schooler asked about a secondary memorial site:

- **CORRECTION:** Committee wanted 3 sites – the main site, something smaller at Building 2 and an interior location

Dr. Schooler asked about the idea of artwork, abstractions or other media components, as well as types of materials:

- Many ideas were generated but the only items with consensus were that the memorial not feature statues and that items from the temporary memorial left for the families and victims should be featured, possibly in an indoor space.
- Materials should be of the highest quality, something that will stand the test of time. A theme that came out repeatedly was the need to do this right.

## D. DINNER BREAK AT 6:30 PM

## E. DISCUSSION ON NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL PRESENTATION.

Dr. Schooler did a run-through of the following City Council Presentation categories with the Committee Members:

- Remembrance
- Roles of 5/31 Memorial Committee
- Committee Members; Meeting Dates and Facilitator Info
- The Progress
- Committee's Discussion on Purpose of 5/31 Memorial
- What the Committee wants people to feel and discover at the Memorial
- Community Engagement
- Potential Sites
- Visuals of Memorials in other Localities
- Recommendations

The presentation to City Council is scheduled for 45 minutes. There was discussion on ensuring a polished presentation with ample time for the Q&A session, and that the Council hear directly from Committee members, not just Kearns and West.

Dr. Schooler explained that the briefing to City Council is to get approval to move onto the next phase of the project: a Request for Qualifications to find design teams.

The Committee discussed a potential timeline if Council were to endorse the Committee's recommendation.



**Potential Timeline**

- August 9, 2022: Resolution to Council to fund two (2) \$10,000 design stipends to finalists & fund next phase of Kearns & West services
- September 2022: Issue Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
- October 2022: RFQ Submittal Deadline
- October 2022: 5/31 Memorial Committee reviews and selects up to two 2 finalists to submit site-specific designs and proposals
- November 2022: Finalists visit sites, engage with stakeholders
- Winter 2022/2023: Site-specific designs and proposals due from finalists, Committee solicits input from families, those impacted and public, and interviews finalists
- Spring 2023: Committee recommends final design and budget to Council with possible funding options

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### **KEARNS & WEST CONTRACT DISCUSSION**

- Funding is nearly exhausted for Kearns and West's contract to facilitate the work of the committee and interface with families. There was unanimous support from the Committee to request Council extend Kearns and West's contract with the City. The facilitation from Dr. Schooler has been instrumental up to this point. The work that Ms. Slutzker has done as a liaison to the family cannot be disrupted in the middle of the process.

### **SCHEDULE FOR TOMORROW:**

- City Council presentation is set for Tuesday, July 12 at 2:15 p.m.
- Members should arrive at 1:30 p.m.
- Following the presentation to Council, the Committee will reconvene in Building 19 for a de-briefing.

## **F. ADJOURNMENT**