

EAST MARSHALL STREET WELL PROJECT

Community Consultations on the Well #4 Preliminary Report May 30, 2015

On Saturday, May 30, 2015 Stakeholders gathered at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School with members of the East Marshall Street Well Planning Committee, VCU Staff and consultants to continue the community process “to identify individuals who would serve in the role of the “Family Representative Council” and make recommendations around memorialization, reburial of the human remains and the need for additional examination of the remains”.



Kevin Allison, The Senior Assistant to the President at Virginia Commonwealth University, welcomed all in attendance. He shared his excitement and honor that attendees took their time to give input and feedback as it relates to this important topic.

The Community Consultations have 3 main goals:

- Implement a community process that encourages learning about the human remains discovered near East Marshall Street
- Seek community input in the formation of a Family Representative Council
- Represent the descendent community that will make recommendations on behalf of those individuals whose remains were discovered to support appropriate study, memorialization, and reburial with dignity.

During the consultation, community members heard from Ryan Smith, PhD from VCU and Joseph Jones, PhD from The College of William & Mary. Participants also heard from Kevin Allison, PhD on the Family Representative Council to be formed. They then engaged in facilitated discussion in groups of five to ten. The discussion and session was led by Justice and Sustainability Associates, a civic engagement and alternative dispute resolution firm based in Washington, D.C.

The day was closed by a saxophone performance of “When the Saints Go Marching In” from Mr. Ricky Cokes.

Participants’ responses to the Consultation’s Tasks on back.

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What do you think about memorialization? Do you think the human remains found in the well should be reburied?:

Memorial & Ceremony

Memorial should be educational
Reflect factual information
Handmade carved coffins should be considered
Desire for a mourning period
Grievance or healing is necessary
Desire for an apology to the Spirits/Souls
Desire for a physical memorial
Desire for an apologize to the community
Are there alternatives to reburial
Desire for memorial to be a family educational experience
Emphasis should be placed on the importance of public education

Location

Who will fund this project?
Has land been identified for reinterment?
Is there a site available on the MCV Campus?
Is there land in Richmond?

Questions For Consideration:

Are vcu medical student aware of this history
Should we be focused on individual remains or the larger process?
How can we increase public awareness of the EMSW Project?
How can we connect this project with other projects in Richmond?
How did the remains get to the Smithsonian?
What role should the Black History Museum play in this process?

Does the process make sense to you? If not, what would you change?:

Timeline

Process is too fast
This is an important process that requires more deliberation
We need additional consultations
Why is this process being rushed
Can VCU give more time to this process - at least 3 to 6 additional months
Can dates be replaced with goals

FRC Qualifications

People on the council should have attended these community consultations
What should be the racial/ethnic composition of the FRC - majority black

Process

Who will select the FRC
How many people will be on the FRC
How much authority will the FRC have
People on the council should have attended these community consultations
Will VCU devote resources to education FRC
Will the FRC really make an impact, who has the final say
Community should have final word and take over process

Questions for Consideration

Young people should have a role in this process
Meeting information needs to be better disseminated
Can the remains be reburied the African Burial Ground
We need to increase participation (sorority, fraternity, churches etc.)
Would like additional information as a point of reference
Can the name of the project be changed to more accurately reflect the project's work
Can we put Dr. Utsey's documentary on Netflix
Can committee members be separate from the Richmond Burial Ground project

Stay engaged and informed as the project moves forward. Be on the lookout and check for updates frequently:

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