

**Minutes – Lee Highway Alliance (LHA) Working Group on Renaming Lee Highway
(First Meeting)**

September 16, 2020 (virtual meeting via Zoom)

(Sandi Chesrown, Acting Secretary of LHA)

Working Group Members Present (23) (alphabetical order/*also Steering Comm.)

1. Bill Braswell, LHA CAC & Tara Leeway Heights CA
2. Ginger Brown, LHA Co-founder & Executive Director*
3. Mike Cantwell, LHA CAC, President, Yorktown CA, Civic Federation Board
4. Sandi Chesrown, LHA Co-founder & VP, Vice Chair Plan Lee Highway, VP, Waverly Hills CA*
5. Lynn Coates, Arlington Artists Alliance
6. Elaine Furlow, LHA Board & Chair, LHA Communications Committee*
7. Sandra Green, LHA CAC & Calloway Church
8. Lauren Harris, Owner, Little Ambassadors Day Care
9. Paul Holland, LHA CAC, Chair Plan Lee Highway, VP Waverly Hills CA*
10. Wilma Jones, LHA CAC, President, John M. Langston CA
11. Jeff Joseph, Board Member, R.E.A.D., President of SHA
12. Minneh Kane, Member, Arlington Engagement Brigade and Woodmont Civic Association
13. Diane Kelly, LHA CAC & President, Waycroft Woodlawn CA
14. Ben Keeney, LHA CAC & North Highlands CA
15. Anika Kwinana, Chair, Arl. Co. Commission for the Arts, Founder/Steering Committee, Arlington for Justice, Black Lives Matter
16. Annie Moyer, Co-owner, Sun Moon Yoga Studio, Cherrydale
17. Maia Potok-Holmes, LHA Communications Manager*
18. Richard Price, LHA CAC Woodmont CA, LHA Board, Arl Co. Transportation Commission
19. Andrew Rude, LHA CAC & Lyon Village CA
20. Julius Spain, President & Regional VP, Arlington Branch NAACP
21. Jim Todd, LHA CAC & President, Cherrydale CA
22. Matt Weinstein, LHA Board, Chair of Working Group
23. Tom Wolfe, LHA CAC, Leeway Overlee CA, LHA Board

Working Group Members Absent (2)

Michael Hogan, LHA CAC, Old Dominion CA

Grace Abi-Najm Shea, Co-owner, Lebanese Taverna

Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Matt Weinstein, Chair, at 6:30 pm. After welcoming the participants, Matt recognized Katie Cristol, Arlington County Board.

Comments by Katie Cristol, County Board Member and Liaison to LHA

Katie remarked on the County's efforts to eliminate structural racism across the County and within Plan Lee Highway (the land use planning process for the Lee Corridor, currently being led by staff and AECOM). She said that both efforts look to the future and revision what Lee Corridor should become including jobs, transportation, housing, retail, open space, etc. Katie noted that she is enthusiastically looking forward to following the renaming process and understanding the Working Group's recommendations, and sharing that information with surrounding jurisdictions including Falls Church, the City of Fairfax, and Fairfax County.

(Falls Church City renamed Lee Highway as Washington Street, and Lee Highway becomes Fairfax Boulevard in the City of Fairfax for three plus miles.)

Public Meeting

The Chair introduced the agenda via power point and noted that all WG meetings are open to the public and that the minutes and other documents, including the WG charge, will be posted on the LHA web site (leehighwayalliance.com).

Introductions of Working Group Members

The Chair asked each WG member to introduce himself/herself. Comments from Members as to their hopes for this historic effort included:

- Interested in correcting history,
- Hope the name reflects what LH will become in the future,
- What do we want the future to look like...as a Black woman, not always comfortable in VA,
- Name should reflect wellness for the community at large,
- No longer just a highway, but a positive and socially meaningful place,
- One step in moving the re-planning process forward, and continuing to work cooperatively to express all of Arlington,
- Name should more broadly represent the community and history,
- Honored to have a chance to help un-do White supremacy,
- Unique opportunity to make a difference,
- Name should reflect Arlington values and positively impact our businesses,
- Great opportunity to re-brand the corridor and show its diversity and rich culture,
- Name should represent all voices,
- Everyone should feel respected, both symbols and substance are important to heal the traumatic wounds of the past,
- Plan LH is a 30 year plan, and residents in 2050 should be proud of the name,
- Name should be inclusive and represent diversity,
- Important to change both Highway and Lee,
- Name should look at Lee Highway in a different way,
- Must consider a lot of history, especially in Halls Hill/Highview Park,
- Words and names matter – must reckon with the past and build toward the future.

Video

The WG were shown a short video, featuring Sandra Green and Wilma Jones of Halls Hill, that was produced by LHA for the renaming effort. Sandra noted that sometimes you need to change in order to move ahead. She grew up in Halls Hills where many people had traumatic experiences due to racism. Wilma discussed some of Lee Highway's history and noted that she would not want her grandson to have to ask why the corridor is named after Robert E. Lee – a general who led the Confederacy in order to save the institution of slavery.

Rules of Engagement

The agenda continued with the meeting rules including the ZOOM guidelines for participation. The Chair requested that members come to the meetings well prepared and engage respectfully, while contemplating both the past and the future. Be mindful of time and try to stay on topic. All questions will be addressed at the end of each agenda segment. Maia (LHA staff) noted that each member is being asked to 'raise a hand' before speaking and to normally be

muted to prevent background noise. The chat box can be used by WG members to communicate with each other. Participants outside the WG are being asked to participate through the administrator.

Overview of Charge & Process

The Chair noted that the charge was also on the LHA web site and had been sent to each member. In a nutshell, the WG is being asked by LHA and the County Board to participate in 3-4 meetings and to use criteria to identify a top name and two to four other names for renaming Lee Highway. Those 3-5 names will be sent to the LHA Board in December. The LHA Board will hold a special meeting on December 9 to review the recommended names and send them on to the County Board. The criteria, to be agreed upon by the WG at the next meeting, are intended to help explain the rationale behind the names. The LHA Board is asking that the names follow LHA's Guiding Principles, and help to establish a welcoming, economically vibrant, and attractive corridor of neighborhood places.

WG members are asked to strongly encourage family, neighbors, friends, colleagues and others to send names to the LHA web site. In addition to robust input from the community, the process will include input from Advisory Groups (October/November), who will advise the WG. 25 additional volunteers are members of the Advisory Groups, which include specialists in Branding, Business, Institutions (e.g., schools, churches, other), Transportation, and Neighborhoods (who are not members of civic associations).

Looking Ahead – Selection Criteria

The power point illustrated the eight draft criteria, compiled by the Steering Committee (administrative body organizing the volunteers, research, meeting logistics, coordination with the County, etc). The criteria will be discussed at length at the next meeting on September 30, when WG members will be asked for their input on either changing or maintaining the criteria or adding new criteria:

1. Name is **welcoming** to all people and businesses,
2. Name promotes economic vitality and **effectively brands** the corridor,
3. Name increases public understanding of **cultural history and racial equity**,
4. Name is relevant to Arlington or Northern Virginia and its **sense of place** (history, flora, fauna, culture, geology, landscape, etc.),
5. Name is **NOT Highway but promotes the Main Street character** in accord with Plan Lee Highway,
6. Name might work for **all four adjacent jurisdictions** that include Lee Highway,
7. Name reflects **community and business/property owners' input**,
8. Name is **not already being used for another street or road in Arlington**.

Q & A

There was a request that the WG and the County consider renaming Old Lee Highway and Old Dominion at the same time as renaming Lee Highway, as a logical step to reduce confusion. LHA will check on this with the County's Department of Environmental Services (Transportation) and VDOT, and noted that this issue could be considered by the Transportation Advisory Group. This will be discussed more at the next meeting.

Another WG member asked about the schedule for collecting names. The Chair responded that the deadline – unless the WG changes it – is October 21 for names to become part of the Long

List. The Long List will also be considered by the Branding Advisory Group, who will advise the WG with recommendations in early October. At the October 21 meeting, the WG would reduce the Long List of names to a Short List of perhaps 10-12 names. The Short List would be widely advertised as part of a polling effort to the broader community. It is anticipated that through LHA's November Shop Lee Shop Local campaign, flyers will be posted at participating businesses. The flyer will direct people to submit their votes for their favorite names to LHA's web site by November 30.

The criteria were discussed briefly as a helpful framework, but one WG member wondered if there might be a better process such as Ranked Choice Voting. The Chair responded that there are currently nearly 80 names on the Long List, prior to the WG's additional names. Another member supported the criteria as a reasonable way to start discussions and reduce the number of names.

Another member wondered if the one truly objective criterion on the list, i.e., the name not already being in use, could be culled. The criteria and methodology will be discussed and agreed upon at the September 30 meeting (WG meeting #2).

Another member asked what other groups are meeting, and the response was the Steering Committee, an administrative body from LHA comprised of Matt, Ginger, Maia, Sandi, Elaine and Paul, and the Advisory Groups previously discussed. Diversity at all levels was encouraged. (All groups and their volunteers will be posted on the LHA web site.)

Katie Cristol noted that this is different than the process of renaming Jefferson Davis Highway to become Richmond Highway. That was done primarily by the City of Alexandria, and Arlington County became involved closer to the end of the process. Unlike counties, cities in Virginia have the authority to rename and do not have to go to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) or the General Assembly for approval. The CTB has indicated that they would like to see agreement on a name amongst the jurisdictions. If the County is not successful with the CTB, they could go to the General Assembly for approval of a name change within Arlington's borders. The Steering Committee agreed to post the documents on the Jefferson Davis renaming process on LHA's web site.

Members requested a copy of the power point slides, which Maia/Steering Committee noted will be sent to them and posted on LHA's web site.

Ginger Brown noted that with 25 WG members and about 25 other Advisory Group members, the process is reaching a broad constituency. The Steering Committee and the WG members are responsible for increasing the number of participants in the process.

Schedule for 2020 WG Meetings – all are at 6:30 pm on Wednesdays

Meeting 1 – September 16 (introduction to members and process)

Meeting 2 – September 30 (discussion/selection of criteria, recommendations for Long List)

Meeting 3 – October 21 (discussion/narrow list to 10-12 names to be vetted with the public)

Polling Process – Shop Lee Shop Local Campaign with local businesses

Meeting 4 – December 2 (select top choice and two to four alternatives); send to LHA Board

LHA Board Meeting – December 9 (discuss and send to County Board)

Meeting with County Board to discuss names and rationales – date to be determined

County Board discusses with other jurisdictions

County Board forwards their recommendation to CTB or General Assembly

Q&A

Concern was expressed by WG members regarding the contentious nature of the conversation and the importance of listening to and being respectful of all voices. Under the Arlington Way, it was noted that Arlington has more ideas than people.

As has already been agreed with the County Manager's office, the Steering Committee will continue to update Ben Aiken and Samia Bird to discuss recommendations for engaging with the communities.

Fact base talking points were requested. Ginger noted that the Steering Committee has posted FAQs on the web site, and the Steering Committee will try to add additional messaging.

WG members recommended that this become an educational teaching point and that the process engage school children. Sandi promised to follow up with the principals of Swanson and Dorothy Hamm, who are members of the Institutional Advisory Group.

The Chair reminded everyone that the WG's charge is to rename Lee Highway. The name change was voted on unanimously by the LHA Board with one abstention. This represents a large group of people and constituencies in the corridor. LHA has been working with the County on revising the corridor since 2008 to make it less of a highway and more of a Main Street. LHA looks forward to continuing this important discussion with WG members.

Meeting Adjourned – 8:10 pm

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and invited members to the next WG meeting at 6:30 pm, September 30, 2020.