



# Albemarle County

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 18-528, **Version:** 1

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**AGENDA DATE:** 11/14/2018

**TITLE:**

Community Remembrance Project Update

**SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST:** Provide Board of Supervisors with an update on activities related to the Community Remembrance Project and request direction to proceed with next steps

**ITEM TYPE:** Regular Action Item

**STAFF CONTACT(S):** Richardson, Russell

**PRESENTER (S):** Siri Russell

**LEGAL REVIEW:** Yes

**REVIEWED BY:** Jeffery B. Richardson

**BACKGROUND:** Charlottesville's City Council created an ad-hoc blue ribbon commission on May 2, 2016, to address the questions and concerns brought before them regarding race, memorials and public spaces in Charlottesville. This commission brought forth a recommendation, endorsed by City Council in September 2017, to participate in the Equal Justice Initiative's Community Remembrance Project to acknowledge and memorialize the 1898 lynching of John Henry James in the County of Albemarle.

At the July 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Supervisor's the Board voted to adopt a resolution (Attachment A) generally in support of the Community Remembrance Project work and that of the broad community coalition (including UVA, the City of Charlottesville, and others).

At the Board's August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, following significant engagement in remembrance activities (including the soil collection, community discussion on lynching, and community pilgrimage), the Board of Supervisors directed County staff to continue efforts around the Community Remembrance Project, with specific attention given to relevant County-oriented history.

Staff is returning to the Board with proposed projects addressing these opportunities.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:** Engaged Citizens: Successfully engage citizens so that local government reflects their values and aspirations.

**DISCUSSION:** Following the August 8<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, staff has been engaged in the developing proposals for projects that emphasize collaboration, education, and preservation in pursuit of a more complete and inclusive historical record in Albemarle County. The local historical community has been enthusiastic about this work and supportive partnerships have been established with several organizations including:

- Jefferson School African American Heritage Center
- Preservation Virginia

- Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
- Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society
- Central Virginia History Researchers
- Jefferson Madison Regional Library (JMRL)

There are four distinct projects proposed:

#### Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) Arts Response

ACPS continues to build on their efforts to intentionally focus on the teaching and learning of “hard history.” Last year, after being awarded a grant (sponsored through the National Writing Project and John Legend's Show Me Campaign. Let 'Em Shine), the division engaged in a year-long Problem- Based Learning project for high school students that asked students to consider four central questions. Why do we have monuments? Whose stories have been told through the monuments in our community? Whose stories are missing and how do we want to memorialize them?

This year ACPS teachers are experiencing powerful professional learning which helps them examine their curriculum and pedagogy (through a partnership with Montpelier, and professional development from organizations like Facing History and Ourselves and the Center for Liberal Arts at UVA, and the Office of Human Rights.) Additionally, teachers are being asked to transfer their new knowledge and understandings to designing experiences for students.

This work deepens this Spring through a project tentatively titled, “Our Stories to Tell: A Student-Artist Response to the Concealed and Emerging Stories of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. The Fine Arts department will lend their expertise to this effort by capitalizing on the the sensory engagement, aesthetic experience, and intellectual insight that the arts provide to open the mind, provide critical perspectives, let us embody our experiences, and stimulate deeper learning.

The project parameters are still under development, but participating Albemarle County high schoolers will be able to explore our local concealed, resistance, and emerging stories, while considering:

- What do we gain as a society when we listen to and learn from the multitude of stories available for our consideration?
- What do we lose when stories of and by diverse groups are concealed or lost?
- What is our visions for a future that offers inclusion, equity and justice

Local government staff is working closely with Schools staff in the development of this initiative.

#### Exhibition of Soil

In collaboration with the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center and JMRL, staff is creating an exhibition of the soil from the lynching site of Mr. John Henry James. There are multiple components to the proposed exhibit, including: a stationary display in the County office building and a limited traveling function.

The exhibit will be both commemorative and educational, featuring interpretative text and historical documents, as well as images and video from recent activities.

#### Lane High School Commemoration/Exhibit

A staff team with membership from Parks and Recreation, Facilities and Environmental Services, Community Development, and the County Executive's Office has formed to create a proposal for the development of an educational exhibit inside the County Office Building that celebrates the history of Lane High School. This work could include outreach with Lane alumni and development of the exhibit content could be supported by community partners including the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society.

#### Expanding the Record-Historic Markers

There are currently 38 Virginia Department of Historic Resources affiliated historic markers located in the County of Albemarle. This is a relatively small number given the size of the County and the breadth of its significant state and national history. Staff envisions a multi-year phased expansion of applications to the state Historic Marker program, with support from our community partners, to expand the physical record of County history.

**BUDGET IMPACT:** General guidance from the Board has been that the amount required to fund proposed projects should not exceed \$50,000. Staff will continue to refine costs associated with the projects and will bring back a final budget when all work has been fully scoped. The funding source for this request would be the Reserve for Contingencies.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Board direct staff to:

1. proceed with development and implementation of the proposed Community Remembrance Projects
2. present an appropriation request for funding of these projects, not to exceed a total of \$50,000, at a future date

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A: July 5<sup>th</sup> Resolution

Attachment B: Proposed Preliminary Soil Exhibit Imagery