

# CALFEE TRAINING SCHOOL PROJECT

## *COMMUNITY VISIONING SESSION REPORT*



*Summary of Brainstormed Discussions from March 22-23, 2019 Community Visioning Sessions*

“I was in second grade when integration began and I thought it was great that we were all in class together. That’s how it should be and all was right with the world. I was always proud of my town and in my naiveté it seemed to me we were mostly removed from the racism that plagued the rest of the world in the news.

Last fall, I stood in the confines of the Calfee School building and listened as Dr. Marylen Harmon told the story of how her father took on the Pulaski County School Board for equal pay and treatment no matter your color. And how it was a landmark case that helped lead directly to *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*. And how a young Thurgood Marshall helped handle the case...and I cried. I cried for their bravery but more so I cried for my ignorance. How could I live here for almost 60 years and not know that these things happened right here in our town? How did I not learn this in school?

That day still overwhelms me. That was the day I realized that ignorance is created and “fake news” is not a new thing. The history that I and every child in Pulaski County have been taught up until now is incomplete. Your history is Pulaski’s history and we must make sure that going forward our children learn all of it. Knowing where we have been shows us the path forward and opens the door for us to show respect and kindness to one another. Thank you all for being a part of Pulaski’s path forward.”

-Opening Remarks by David Clark, Mayor of Pulaski  
Community Visioning Sessions  
March 22 and 23, 2019

## METHODOLOGY

In early 2018, a group of Calfee Training School former students and their families, the Town of Pulaski, the Pulaski County YMCA, the Pulaski County Department of Social Services and local parents of young children began working to acquire and renovate the historic African American school. The original goals of the Calfee Training School Project were to (1) meet some of the deep childcare needs in Pulaski County and (2) to preserve and tell the rich history of this institution and the local African American community through a museum. Those goals will be met in what is being called “Phase 1” and includes the front part of the Calfee Training School building.

But “Phase 2” - the rest of the building - is not yet designed. On March 22 and 23, 2019, the Calfee Training School Project convened Community Visioning Sessions with goals to educate the community about the history of the historic African American school and to generate ideas for how the building could be used in the future as a community and cultural center. Over 150 people attended these four-hour sessions to hear stories about the history of the school from former students and to brainstorm future uses that were consistent with the building’s legacy. Those who were unable to attend were invited to submit their ideas about the future building uses via an online survey.

This survey includes the ideas about future uses that were voiced most often in this visioning process. Please take a moment to provide feedback on these ideas. The future Calfee Training School Community and Cultural Center Board will be presented with this community feedback as they develop the plans for renovation and future uses of the building.

## LEGACIES

At the community visioning sessions, the alumni of Calfee Training School shared memories and stories at their tables. At most tables, stories were shared about the infamous Ms. Anderson and Ms. Lena Huckstep’s delicious brown beans and cornbread. From the unforgettable May Day celebration to playing murderball and football with a gravel filled milk carton, Calfee had it all. Even though Calfee was named a "training school" because white people in the Jim Crow South didn't believe Black children could or should learn more than whatever they needed to prepare for domestic or agricultural work, Calfee teachers ensured that their students always received the best education. The teachers were strict but still loved their students dearly. Commanding respect, and through leadership and compassion, the teachers of Calfee Training School dedicated their lives to their students and community, offering a valuable educational curriculum that prepared Calfee students for life and not just to be workers.

The dominant themes generated in these discussions included:

- **Teachers and staff were highly qualified** and committed to delivering a **holistic education** for all students that included extremely high expectations for all.
- **Students were prepared for the future**, not only in terms of work preparedness, but also in terms of being citizens, in spite of the “training school” philosophy that only endeavored to prepare Black children for domestic or agricultural jobs.
- The Calfee Training School was like a **family** that included faculty, staff, and students as well as parents and other community members. Most of the African American community felt at home there and were collectively **committed to the success of all students**.
- Extremely limited school financial resources inspired a sense of **creativity and innovation** that was evident in everything from the curriculum, to the food prepared for the students, to the games the students created for themselves during recess.

## IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL CENTER USES

In addition to a childcare center and a museum space for local African American history, the community visioning session participants generated long lists of ideas for repurposing of the Calfee Training School building. The following ideas were shared more than once during the small group report-outs.

### *Spaces*

- **Multipurpose Space** equipped with everything necessary for hosting **performing arts events** (music, dance, theatre) as well as **interactive community meetings**. The space could be available for rental for reunions, weddings and other events. (Revenue Generating)
- **Commercial Kitchen** (with walk in freezer/fridge units for **food distribution program**)
- **One-stop Shop for Human Services** - space for food distribution, social services, tutoring, etc.)
- **Non-Profit/Human Services/Small Business Workspace for Rent** (Revenue Generating)
- **Playground**
- **Senior Center** (Adult Day Care) - creates opportunities for intergenerational work with childcare center
- **Computer lab** for tutoring or classes
- **Gymnasium**
- **Coffeshop/Cafe** (could be revenue generating)
- **Community Gardens**

### *Programs:*

- **Adult Education Programs** - including, but not limited to classes related to GED, health/wellness, dance, theatre, music, technology
- **Youth Programs** - including, but not limited to youth leadership, mentoring, after school programs, arts, theatre, music, life skills, tutoring and parks/recreation.
- **Community Meetings** - Regularly scheduled events to bring the community together. Some ideas for meetings include addiction issues, Black history, sexual assault, police/community relations, and self defense.
- **Mental Health Services/Counseling**
- **May Day Event**

### *How to Connect Calfee Community and Cultural Center with the community:*

- **Historical Tourism** - A walking tour that connects the school with the Moone Hotel, the Ratcliffe Museum, downtown, and the TG Howard Center. Also marketing plans that collectively advertise Calfee, the Ratcliffe Museum, the Wilderness Museum and Christiansburg Institute.
- **Small museum and other educational outreach at Pulaski County High School**

## APPENDIX – RAW DATA FROM SMALL GROUP REPORT-OUTS

*Note: Asterisks (\*) indicate that a particular idea was shared multiple times.*

### Legacies

- Dedicated teachers/staff\*\*\*\*\*
- Excellent teachers\*\*\*\*\*
- Compassion of teachers and staff
- Ms Anderson
- Mr Brown\*
- Lena Huckstep - cook, cornbread, brown beans,\*\*
- Bus Drivers - Rudy (bus 35) and Ms. Mary Rollins
- Communication with teachers/parents\*\*\*
- Ms. Deberry would tutor sick children
- Ms. Gardener
- Teachers were strict but cared for their students\*\*
- Students were prepared\* for the future\*\*\*\* and for success\*\*
- Respect for students/teachers/community\*\*
- Had to honor others
- Things/people didn't fall through the cracks
- Seeing progress in personal growth\*
- Adults were respected\*
- Commitment to education and the school
- Value of Learning/education/discipline\*\*\*\*\*
- Academic excellence (holistic approach)
- Food\*\*\*
- Children ate even if they had no money\*
- Element of nurturing (Ms. Lena Hookstep)\*
- Sense of community/home\*\*\*\*
- Citizenship
- "It takes a village"\*\*\*
- Connection\*
- Unity of teachers and parents\*\*\*
- Togetherness
- Foundation for whole community
- Calfee like a family
- May Day\*\*\*\*\*
- Fun!\*\*
- Friends
- Music
- Foundation for Community - education and HOPE for all children\*
- "Calfee School paved the way"
- "People care"
- Instilled hope, love, & equality
- Focus on community and family involvement through activities and events\*
- Close knit community
- Everyone looked after everyone. You were never alone.\*
- "The village was there for us."
- Quality early childhood education
  - Developing and improving early childhood education for all students\*\*
- Community Events\*
- Safe Sanctuary\*
- Resilience\*
- Local History taught in the community and schools
- Fellowship between Black School students\*
- Talent Shows
- Polio Epidemic - Unity among students
- "My Roots"
- Personal responsibility
- Pride
- Boundaries (creek/neighborhoods)
- Hub of Black community
- Mentoring (all equal and all deserved to have and BE the best)
- Creativity ("football")\*
- At Calfee, you can learn!
- Mixed legacy
  - Quality of education
  - Discrimination
- Zoology Day
  - Science/animal assemblies
  - Nature study - catching fish and crawdads
- History and stories
- Preserving history of Calfee as project moves forward
- Educate the Whole Person
- Emphasis on arts and creativity
- Calfee was a safe haven\*
- Special due to many shared memories
- 7th grade dance/prom\*\*
- Sports - basketball/football with milk carton, murder ball, marbles, races, creek walkers, swings, seesaw\*\*\*
- Rhythm Band - triangle and tambourines
- Marching Band
- Graduation
- Positive Experiences in Negative times\*

## May Day Memories

- Hot Dogs, Ice Cream
- Dressing Up - Same costumes/colors
- May Day Song
- Each class did some kind of a performance
- May Pole wrapped in different colored pastel crepe paper
- May Queen
- Races/Sack Races
- Parents invited/younger siblings
- Outside vendors
- No Watermelon
- Fun Day (No curriculum)
- Children came from all over (Allisonia, New River, etc.)
- Poured dry ice into creek to watch smoke rise

## Ideas for Community and Cultural Center

- Multi-purpose space/Event Hall/Community Room\*\*\*\*\*
  - For use by reunions/groups\*\*\*
  - Public meeting space rentals\*\*\*\*
  - Weddings
  - Dances
  - Adequate size/seating
  - Flexible use
  - Chair/table storage
  - Scheduling
  - Stage
  - Equipment (A/V, projector, sound system, computer wiring, requires electrical upgrade)
  - Public restrooms
  - May need to increase parking
  - HVAC
  - Displays
- Arts Center/Revitalized stage\*\*\*\*\*
  - Dance Studio/Space for teaching\*\*\*
  - Music classes\*\*
    - Musically equipped
  - Theatre/Performance space\*\*\*\*
  - Arts classes\*\*\*\* (taught by Dr. Villinger)
  - Rentable space
  - Art shows/exhibits
  - Sponsored arts education
- Office space to rent\*\*\*\*\*
  - board offices
  - Storage
  - Business incubation Space
- Programming for seniors
  - Adult/Senior Center
  - Intergenerational initiatives
  - Seniors reading to children\*\*\*
  - Seniors teaching children what their childhood was like without screens/technology
  - Near children/early education could provide synergy\*\*
  - Senior citizens as mentors
  - Opportunities for adults to teach youth difference services and jobs
  - Computer literacy programs\*
  - GED
  - Literacy
  - Life Skills\*\*\* (cooking, finance, sewing, etc.)
  - Tutoring
- Programming for Adults
  - Tutoring
  - Wellness classes\*
  - GED Classes\*\*\*\*\*
  - Technology classes
  - Literacy Classes\*\*\*
  - ESL Programming\*\*\*
- Programming for Youth
  - Youth Leadership Programs\*
  - Scholarships
  - Preparing youth to be community leaders
  - Youth mentoring\*\*\*
    - Fine Arts Center uses a program called Stem
  - After school/Mentor programs\*\*
  - Activities for teens 12-17 (rebuilding stage)
  - Homework help
  - Life skills\*\*\*\*\*
  - After school meal
  - Job readiness
  - Bus passes for teens
  - Escape rooms
  - Track students' progress in activities
  - Transportation for youth
- Commercial Kitchen\*\*\*\*
- Parks/Recreation

- Sports Camps
- Youth sports\*\*\*
- Gymnastics
- Self defense
- Gym space
- Rec Center\*
- Historical Tourism
  - Walking Tour Historical Destination to include Moon Hotel, TG Howard Center, calfee the Ratcliffe\*
  - Virtual video tour of what Calfee was like during its prime time\*
  - Perhaps coordinated with Ratcliffe Museum, Theatre, Boarding Houses, Peak Creek Corridor)
  - YouTube tour of Calfee School
- Museum\*\*\*
  - Interactive exhibits\*
  - Pictures of alumni/ their children
  - Hands-on exhibit
  - Cultural events
  - Guest Speakers
  - Traveling exhibits
  - Wall of memories/fame\*\*\*\*
  - Legacy carried throughout facility\*\*\*\*
  - Classroom replica\*\*\*\*
  - Commemorative signs by classrooms\* (dedicated to the educators and what they did to impact the lives of others in the school)
  - Recognition of other African American schools\*
  - Historical reference library with digital access to documents
- Monthly Community Meetings/Seminars\*\*\*\*
  - Human Services\*
  - Law Enforcement
  - Court Services
  - Addiction issues
  - Black history
  - Sexual Assault
  - Police/community relations
  - Self defense
  - Annual fundraiser
- Coffeeshop (small space)\*\*\*\*\*
  - Poetry, Jazz in a cafe
  - Non-profit- employs formerly incarcerated and returning citizens
- Tutoring\*\*\*\*\*
  - Classroom setting
- One Stop Shop for Human Services (food distribution, social services, tutoring, etc.)
  - Food distribution - working kitchen, community gardens, etc.\*\*\*\*\*
  - food/meals for low-income individuals and families
- Playground\*\*\*\*\*
  - outdoor play spaces\*\*\*
  - Indoor/outdoor
  - Sports fields/courts
- Childcare with extended hours
  - for 2nd/3rd shift workers\*\*\*\*
  - and/or after hours care for seniors
  - Free for low income families
- Magnetism/Want it to draw all people
- Low income focus for activities/performances
- Safe Haven Visitation\*
- Corporate Sponsorships
- Counseling
- May Day Activities\*
- Computer lab
- Game Room
- Handicap accessibility
- New River Trail Extension (Peak Creek Corridor)
- Charter School for Performing Arts\*
- Preserve a small room for a listening history lesson (exhibit)
- Transportation help/accessibility/PAT Stop
- Office space\*\*
- Outside of Calfee
- Like Prices Fork Elementary Project (Housing, Restaurants, Craft vendors)
- Camps unog? Adults- using volunteers
- Using outreach projects
- Use churches to communicate
- Relationships with neighbors, church members and professionals
- Facility tours
- Whatever they decide to do, keep an open mind
- Investigate national historical registry Landmark (WPA? Federal Grant Opportunity)
- Community Garden\* (cold frames, greenhouse)
- Basketball
- Martial Arts/Gymnastics Classes
- Drop-in Childcare

- Small museum at PCHS (like CI exhibit at CHS)
- Extension blocks at PCHS
- Play - when finished development, present at PCHS
- Coordination with other area museums
  - Wilderness Trail
  - Transportation Museum

#### Other Suggestions

- Online suggestion box
- May Day Celebration
- Indoor brick “garden”
- More activities for children w/ disabilities