

# **Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission**

## **March 27, 2007 - Advisory Council**

### **Library of Virginia**

The Advisory Council was created to serve in a consultative capacity to the Commission and to deliberate and dispose of issues directed to it by the Commission. Its first meeting was facilitated by Greg Brittingham from VCU. The Advisory Council identified several critical principles to guide the commemoration period: (i) Inclusiveness, (ii) Being well marketed and well funded, (iii) Utilizing and promoting existing resources (iv) Having a central location or hubs, (v) Being compelling to all ages, (vi) Creating strong ties to education, and (vii) Creating a lasting legacy.

The Advisory Council articulated a positive vision for the commemoration and offered generalized suggestions, such as signature events that would bring focus to the Civil War story, coordinating existing assets, and creating an interactive, high technology website.

The Commission directed 11 specific questions to the Advisory Council, on which they received a wide range of responses. With regards to whether a specific new building would be needed for the sesquicentennial, the responses were divided. Some stated that a headquarters is needed, but a not necessarily a new building; existing facilities could also serve the purpose well. The Commission also asked for examples of specific events, exhibits, and lectures that should be held, and many good ideas were generated. There was widespread consensus that the official commemoration should begin in 2009 in order to include Harper's Ferry.

## **April 9, 2007 - Executive Committee**

### **General Assembly Building**

The Executive Committee met to receive a preliminary report of the Advisory Council and to discuss, consider, and make recommendations regarding allocation of the 2007 appropriations to the Commission. One of the central points of discussion was whether a new facility should be built for the sesquicentennial. After much consideration, the recommendation was that a new facility not be constructed, for the following reasons:

- 1). Saturation and maximizing resources- Virginia is rich in Civil War resources. Visitors would be well served by the Commission taking a role in promoting, unifying and coordinating these institutions.
- 2). Sustainability - Museum attendance nationwide has been in a steady decline and many museums have had to close or merge collections. Whether the public can support another Civil War facility for the long term is of major concern
- 3). Geographic diversity - The Civil War impacted every area of Virginia, and citizens and visitors should be provided with information that makes it easy to see sites and hear stories throughout the state.

**April 19, 2007- Commission meeting  
Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel and Waterfront Conference Center**

The full Commission meeting was held in conjunction with the Civil War Preservation Trust Annual Conference. Speaker Howell opened the meeting by observing a moment of silence in memory of the 32 victims at Virginia Tech.

**Jim Campi, Civil War Preservation Trust, Policy and Communications Director**

Mr. Campi welcomed Commission members to the Annual Conference and presented information on the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT). The CWPT currently has 70,000 members and has helped preserve over 20,000 acres of battlefield lands. Mr. Campi presented an overview of the events of the conference, and added that legislative members, including Speaker Howell, Senator Chichester, Senator Houck and Delegate May would be honored at an awards banquet for their support in the Virginia Battlefield Preservation Program.

**Dr. Sandy Treadway - Report from Advisory Council**

Dr. Treadway, who was named as the Advisory Council liaison to the Commission, delivered the report of the Advisory Council. The Speaker mentioned that the Executive Committee relied on the recommendations in its deliberations, and thanked Dr. Treadway and the Advisory Council members for their contributions.

**Dr. Beverly Thurston - Report from Department of Education**

Dr. Thurston talked about three specific areas: (1) The information that is currently in the SOLs regarding the Civil War; (2) Resources available to Department of Education to teach the Civil War, and (3) A description of how the SOL review process operates.

Current SOL requirements for elementary school are that students must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the issues which divided the nation and led to the Civil War. In middle school, students must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the causes, major events, and effects of the Civil War. Finally, in high school, the students must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era and its importance as a major turning point in American history.

Dr. Thurston gave an overview on the curriculum framework that underpins the SOLs and highlighted resources that are available to teachers, such as: 1). Curriculum resources which contain information that all teachers must teach in Virginia, 2). Enhanced scope and sequence packages, such as online access, web access, practice tests, review sheets, etc., 3). Specific websites on the DOE homepage for SOL topics, and 4). Offering professional development through online courses for teachers to get re-certification and/or graduate credits.

Last, Dr. Thurston reviewed the timeline for the schedule for the review of the History and Social Science Standards of Learning. The process began in January 2007 and is scheduled to end in July 2008, when the final curriculum document will be posted on the DOE website. The process includes identifying a Standards of Learning review team, distributing documents for

public comment, conducting public hearings and having a final review and adoption of the curriculum by the Board of Education.

**Ms. Karen Grim - Division of Motor Vehicles: Special license plate program**

Ms. Grim gave an overview of the special license plate program, and discussed the qualifications for an organization to qualify for revenue-sharing. Ms. Grim noted that the Jamestown plate is an exception to the revenue-sharing process. She further noted three things to consider before moving forward with special plate: 1). Competition - there are over 200 special interest plates, 2). Registration fees are going up in July which may negatively impact sales, and 3). The design of the place needs to be visually appealing. She also presented information regarding the addition \$1 fee for vehicle registrations in the appropriation act that is currently directed toward the Jamestown commemoration.

**Dick Hickman - Report on 2007 appropriations to the Commission**

Mr. Hickman reported that the General Assembly has appropriated a total of \$122,000 for 2007 and \$2,769,400 for 2008. This amount reflects expenses for the Commission and the Advisory Council. He also mentioned that the General Assembly has appropriated \$573,800 for 2007 and \$273,800 for 2008 to non-State agencies for purposes related to the Civil War.

**Speaker Howell - Report of the Executive Committee**

The report of the Executive Committee was adopted.

**Staff Report - Overview of Work Plan and Comprehensive Plan**

Cheryl Jackson outlined the additional meetings of the Commission which are to be held throughout the state and reviewed the 2007 work plan of the Commission as follows:

- 1). Hire a development officer;
- 2). Establish liaison with each locality to form sesquicentennial committee;
- 3). Issue an RFP for a Web Developer;
- 4). Monitor commemoration activities in other states; and
- 5). Coordinate activities with museum, parks, agencies, etc related to the commemoration.

Delegate Lingamfelter asked staff to look into the US Army Military History Institute's program of conducting staff rides for educators.

**Comments**

Alex Wise - American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar

Mr. Wise discussed the notion of leveraging, the impact of the total amount of money appropriated, and offered suggestions for the funding of programs.

Waite Rawls - Museum of the Confederacy

Mr. Rawls commented that the MOC needs a new building to house its collections. Members of the Commission reiterated that its focus will be on coordinating and unifying activities, facilities, and events throughout the state, and that is not recommending the building of a new facility for the sesquicentennial commemoration.

**Next Meeting**

The next Commission meeting will be held July 16 in Williamsburg, in conjunction with the Southern Legislative Conference annual meeting.

**Chairman:**

The Hon. William J. Howell

**For information, contact:**

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**Website:**

[www.virginiacivilwar.org](http://www.virginiacivilwar.org)