



MIDDLEBURG TOWN COUNCIL
Special Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 6, 2022



PENDING APPROVAL

PRESENT: Mayor Trowbridge M. Littleton
Vice Mayor Peter A. Leonard-Morgan
Councilmember Chris W. Bernard
Councilmember J. Kevin Daly
Councilmember Morris E. "Bud" Jacobs
Councilmember C. Darlene Kirk
Councilmember Philip M. Miller
Councilmember Cindy C. Pearson

STAFF: Danny Davis, Town Manager
Rhonda S. North, MMC, Town Clerk
William M. Moore, Deputy Town Manager

The Town Council of the Town of Middleburg, Virginia held a special meeting on Monday, June 6, 2022 in the Town Hall Council Chambers, located at 10 West Marshall Street, to hear presentations on the acquisition of the Asbury Church from the Town. Mayor Littleton led Council and those attending in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. The roll was called at 6:30 p.m. Councilmember Miller advised that he was attending the meeting remotely from home for medical reasons.

Mayor Littleton explained that the Council would hear from the two offerors on the re-use of the Asbury Church, with each being given twenty minutes to make their presentation. He advised that he would then ask each offeror questions on behalf of the Council, with the questions consisting of two general ones and some that were unique to their proposals.

Presentation of Proposal – Loudoun Freedom Center

Mayor Littleton thanked the Loudoun Freedom Center for their hard work on their proposal. He advised that the Council would diligently assess the proposals in order to arrive at the right decision. Mr. Littleton explained that the process would be that the Council would hear the proposals during this meeting; however, it would not deliberate on them. He further explained that the members would score the proposals using the scoring sheet and would meet over the next couple of weeks to discuss them, with the goal being to make a decision in four weeks.

Robin Burke, Executive Director of the Loudoun Freedom Center, advised Council that the Freedom Center was founded in 2015 and was a 501(C)(3) organization. She reviewed their mission, which was to eliminate injustice and provide educational opportunities through research, history, and historical preservation. Ms. Burke noted that their work had been recognized on the federal, state, and local levels and opined that they were the best choice for this project. She advised that the Loudoun Freedom Center supported the Council's vision to revitalize this historic African American treasure so it could once again become a beacon of hope and unity in Middleburg. Ms. Burke opined that their proposal contained a strong plan that was financially viable and demonstrated long-term sustainability.

Ms. Burke reviewed the history of the Asbury Church, which was built in 1829, making it the oldest surviving church building in Middleburg and one of the oldest in the Northern Piedmont region in Virginia. She noted that it was originally built for those who didn't want to worship with other denominations in town; however, between 1857 and 1860, it was used for many purposes, including storage, as a government grain depot, and as a morgue and hospital for

Confederate soldiers. Ms. Burke advised that in 1864, the church became the first African American church in Middleburg and by 1866, was thriving. She noted that the church was renovated in 1880, at which time an organ, church bell and pulpit were added. Ms. Burke advised that in addition to Sunday School, at times, the church was used as a public school for Black children. She noted that it was the heartbeat of the African American community. Ms. Burke advised that the church was abandoned in 1994, when the congregation merged with the Willisville Methodist Church's congregation, and remains vacant.

Ms. Burke advised that the Loudoun Freedom Center understood the importance of preserving, protecting, and promoting the rich African American history, culture and legacy in Middleburg and was committed to the restoration, preservation, and maintenance of the Asbury Church. She noted that they recognized the investment the Town made to stabilize it and advised that they would capitalize on that investment. Ms. Burke stressed that the Freedom Center was committed to ensuring the church was restored to its historic profile, with no modifications to its layout. She advised that they planned to hold weekly worship services, community programming and educational activities in the main sanctuary, with the second level being used for education and historic tours that would highlight Middleburg by displaying artifacts, photographs, and exhibits. Ms. Burke noted that they planned to partner with restoration and preservation experts. She advised that Pastor Michelle Thomas was one of only two African Americans in Loudoun County who was certified in public history and historic preservation. Ms. Burke noted that Pastor Thomas was the first African American to serve on the Loudoun County Heritage Commission and to establish a church in Loudoun County.

Pastor Michelle Thomas, Founder and President of the Loudoun Freedom Center, displayed a video depicting the partnership between the Loudoun County Public Schools and the Freedom Center. She opined that it was possible for people to study the shared history of Middleburg, the Civil War, and the Asbury Church itself. Pastor Thomas advised that it was the Loudoun Freedom Center's responsibility to preserve, protect and promote that history. She opined that it was a phenomenal story to tell in this time of great division. Pastor Thomas invited the Council to review some of the projects in which the Loudoun Freedom Center was involved. She noted that they have submitted a proposal for the Council's consideration and acknowledged that it would be reviewed in detail.

Pastor Thomas noted that she wanted to focus on the preservation, restoration, and integration of the church. She advised that the Loudoun Freedom Center was solvent and had the money for the project, including a \$255,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, much of which would go to refurbishing the church. Pastor Thomas noted that they also had a grant letter from a benevolent supporter in the amount of \$250,000. She opined that the question of whether they had the money for the project was resolved.

Pastor Thomas opined that the most concerning issue associated with the restoration was programming and preservation in terms of programming. She suggested that anyone could put a building back together; however, telling the story in a way that was inclusive and comprehensive was what made the Loudoun Freedom Center the best choice for the project. Pastor Thomas reviewed their preservation and revitalization projects and programs, including who they partnered with to accomplish them. She opined that being able to bring generations together to tell stories of revitalization was fantastic lesson planning and coaching and explained that the Loudoun Freedom Center used historic sites such as the Asbury Church to do so. Pastor Thomas advised that this was what made the lessons real. She described what she envisioned for the Asbury Church programming and suggested it would begin with her playing the organ when students arrived for a tour, followed by the sharing of history, a tour of the facilities, and interactive talks. Pastor Thomas advised that some of the program opportunities would include Homecoming Day, Emancipation Day, Black History Month and restoring the soul of Middleburg.

In response to an inquiry from the Council as to whether the Loudoun Freedom Center would commit to adequately addressing the stormwater drainage problems on the site, which affected the downhill neighbors, Pastor Thomas acknowledged that this was a significant issue and one with which she was familiar. She noted that they have addressed similar issues in the past through the use of trenches. Pastor Thomas advised that the Freedom Center would use Virginia Tech landscaping students to help them address the issue on the site.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding how the Freedom Center planned to address the parking challenge associated with the site, Pastor Thomas advised that most of the time, the church would not be at full capacity. She noted that church buildings were no longer filled; therefore, parking needs were not the same as they were pre-COVID. Pastor Thomas advised that they would use parking garages and on-street parking spaces, with a shuttle to bring people back and forth. She further advised that they would partner with the Shiloh Baptist Church to use some of their parking since their services would be at different times. Pastor Thomas opined that there would be two to three parking spaces on the site next to the church.

Mayor Littleton noted that on-street parking was difficult to find in this area and suggested the need for the Freedom Center to look at other options.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding how the proposed mediation agreement would work, Pastor Thomas explained that it would be used if needed as leverage to ensure the preservation of the building. She advised that they were proposing to restore the building over a fifteen-year period. Pastor Thomas explained that given the current economy, they would not begin the work immediately as it would be too expensive. She suggested it would take a couple of years to do the pre-work associated with the project, which would allow prices to fall. Pastor Thomas advised that if nothing were done in the fifteen years, the Loudoun Freedom Center would return to the Council and enter into mediation and suggested the Town could help. She advised that the mediation would take no longer than three years and if there was no progress after an additional two, the property would be returned to the Town. Pastor Thomas advised that she did not see this as an issue, as she would do everything in her power to make sure the church was restored.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding how the Freedom Center arrived at their estimate of 10,000 visitors annually, Pastor Thomas advised that it was based on three school bus trips per week, with approximately fifty students per bus. She opined that this was doable given the number of schools in Loudoun County. Pastor Thomas noted that they would also offer classes and tours of the church. She opined that this would only be an issue if COVID returned. Pastor Thomas advised that she only used the student model in projecting her numbers.

Ms. Burke advised Council that she also modeled the numbers for symposiums and produced a similar result.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding the fifteen-year timeline for the restoration and the availability of funding, Pastor Thomas advised that she did not think it would take fifteen years to complete the restoration; however, she couldn't say given the effects of the pandemic. She noted that she would get this in the public's view as soon as possible, as this project provided the best history in Middleburg.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Burke as to the Council's concerns, Mayor Littleton explained that the Council was simply asking whether the Loudoun Freedom Center thought it would take fifteen years to complete the restoration.

Pastor Thomas reiterated that she did not believe it would. She noted that they had the support of many people.

Mayor Littleton advised Pastor Thomas and Ms. Burke that they could provide additional information to the staff. He asked that they send the staff a copy of their PowerPoint presentation.

Mayor Littleton recessed the meeting from 7:13-7:30 p. m., at which time, he called it back to order.

Presentation of Proposal – 105 Jay Street, LLC

Mayor Littleton thanked the representatives from 105 Jay Street, LLC for appearing before the Council to make a presentation. He reviewed the processes for the presentation and for the Council's review and consideration of the proposals.

Brett Gable, Bridget Wilson, and Brian Wilson appeared before the Council representing 105 Jay Street, LLC. Mr. Gable reviewed his history and noted that he had completed many historic renovation projects in Loudoun County, as well as in the surrounding area. Ms. Wilson reviewed her history, including her retail experience and historic building renovation experience. She noted that she was currently the owner of Native Barr Studios in Middleburg. Mr. Wilson reviewed his history, including his background in real estate redevelopment and, in particular, in dealing with old buildings.

Mr. Gable reviewed the history of the Asbury Church. Mr. Wilson advised that Native Barre Studios and 105 Jay Street, LLC would form a partnership to restore the Asbury church, to preserve the history of the church, and to re-open it to the community for a variety of uses. He noted that they were fully funded; therefore, they could begin the renovation work immediately and would complete it quickly. Mr. Wilson advised that they planned to keep both the interior and exterior architectural integrity. He further advised that they planned to relocate the Native Barr Studios into the space.

Ms. Wilson explained that the plan was that the studio would be located in the big open space. She noted that they had very little equipment and operated early in the morning; therefore, the space would be available for others' use later in the day. Ms. Wilson advised that they would donate the building for use by others for historical and educational events, as well as to A Place To Be. She read a letter of support from A Place To Be's co-founder.

Mr. Gable reported that 105 Jay Street, LLC had contacted local historian and educator Eugene Scheel, who agreed to bring his fall 2022 classes of Loudoun County teachers to the church. He advised that the local schools would also be encouraged to tour the property to learn about its history.

Mr. Wilson advised that they already created a QR code that would take people to a website they created for the Asbury Church. He noted that they also created a video, which was available on the website. Mr. Wilson explained that the website would be a repository of the history of the church. He advised that they would collaborate with the Friends of the Asbury Church to spearhead the development of the website content. Mr. Wilson noted that the website would also be used to report on the progress of the restoration project. He proposed that plaques be placed on the windows and noted that they were conducting research on the wording. Mr. Wilson advised that artifacts would be located on the second floor and would be available for people to view.

Ms. Wilson advised that they met with the Friends of the Asbury Church to discuss their ideas. She suggested that individuals' memories be recorded and placed on the website so people could listen to them and learn about the church at any time.

Mr. Gable encouraged the Council to act now. He opined that the Town had been a good steward of the building to date; however, he suggested the need to make it a vibrant asset for the community, as well as a repository for information. Mr. Gable opined that it would be a wonderful gathering spot.

Rucker Slater, a banker, appeared before the Council on behalf of 105 Jay Street, LLC. He advised that he had worked on six to eight projects with Mr. Gable and opined that he was qualified for this one. Mr. Slater recommended 105 Jay Street, LLC for the project.

Carol Lee, of the Willisville Preservation Foundation, advised that her vision for the Asbury Church was that it would give back to the community. She noted that many people could not afford to rent the Middleburg Community Center and opined that they could rent the church for a function. Ms. Lee advised that it was her vision that a museum would be located there.

Mr. Gable opined that 105 Jay Street, LLC was proposing a sustainable offer.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding whether they would commit to adequately addressing the stormwater drainage problems on the site, which affected the downhill neighbors, Mr. Gable advised that he had done a lot of water projects. He noted that one of his partners was a hydrology engineer. Mr. Gable suggested the need for

the installation of curb and gutter at the edge of the property and advised that he would work with the Town to accomplish that. He suggested that if the power line were moved, this would also help to address the stormwater issues. Mr. Gable expressed hope that the sidewalk could also be completed.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding parking for the site, Mr. Wilson advised that they had looked closely at that issue. He acknowledged that there were only two parking spaces on it. Mr. Wilson suggested Ms. Wilson's clients would walk to the studio or park on the street. He opined that there was room on the north side of the building to create some additional parking, including handicapped spaces. He advised that they would not commit to a number; however, there would be more spaces than were currently available.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding the promotion of the church and the town's African American heritage, Mr. Gable advised that they were discussing that with Ms. Lee. Ms. Wilson advised that they met with church leaders who were aligned with their interests.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding long-term damage to the structure through the installation of ballet bars and mirrors, Mr. Gable advised that they were proposing to construct a 2x4 wall, with drywall, that would act as a chase; and, explained that the mirrors and ballet bars would not be attached to the building's original structure. He advised that they were proposing the addition of picture molding on the second floor for the hanging of art.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding whether a six-month timeline for completion of the renovations was reasonable, Mr. Gable reported that they had received four estimates for the work. He noted that the last contractor said it would probably take nine months. Mr. Gable advised that the restoration work was not invasive. He noted that they were proposing the addition of interior storm windows in order to protect the old ones. Mr. Gable advised Council that multiple contractors could be performing work simultaneously. He acknowledged that the Town had already done a lot of the work that was needed to preserve the building.

In response to an inquiry from the Council regarding their profitability goals, Mr. Gable advised the Council that Native Barr Studio's rent payments would cover the cost of the bank note. He noted that they have talked to non-profits about using the building and would allow them to do so for free or for a nominal cleaning fee. Mr. Gable opined that they may get a second tenant for the building.

Mr. Wilson reiterated that the studio's rent would cover most of the cost. He opined that special event revenues would also help pay down the principle on the note. Mr. Wilson opined that they would be debt free very quickly.

Ms. Wilson advised Council that during COVID, she easily paid her rent. She further advised that she had a huge following.

Mr. Gable advised that they would make sure the building was always cared for.

In response to an inquiry from the Council as to whether individuals had been approached regarding using the building for educational purposes, Mr. Gable advised that they were at a crossroad for how far out they should reach out at this time. He noted that Mr. Scheel already had a following. Mr. Gable opined that they could get the students and educators into the church.

Ms. Wilson opined that they were uniquely suited for the space and could save the church. She suggested that no other business would work as perfectly in it. Ms. Wilson reiterated that they wanted to give back to the community.

Mayor Littleton asked that they email their presentation and any other materials they wished to share with the Council to the Town Manager.

There being no further business, Mayor Littleton declared the meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

APPROVED:

Trowbridge M. Littleton, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Rhonda S. North, MMC, Town Clerk

June 6, 2022 Middleburg Town Council Meeting

(Note: This is a transcript prepared by a Town contractor based on the video of the meeting. It may not be entirely accurate. For greater accuracy, we encourage you to review the video of the meeting that is on the Town's website – www.middleburgva.gov)

Bridge Littleton: Okay, great. All right. We will call the special meeting to order. First item is Pledge of Allegiance.

Everyone: [Pledge of Allegiance]

Bridge Littleton: Next item is the roll call.

Bud Jacobs: Bud Jacobs.

Chris Bernard: Chris Bernard.

Darlene Kirk: Darlene Kirk.

Bridge Littleton: Bridge Littleton.

Peter Leonard Morgan: Peter Leonard Morgan.

Cindy Pearson: Cindy Pearson.

J. Kevin Daly: John Kevin Daly.

Rhonda North: Okay. Philip, do you want to?

Philip Miller: Philip Miller.

Bridge Littleton: And tell us that you're attending remotely for medical reasons.

Philip Miller: I'm attending remotely because of medical reasons. Thank you COVID.

Rhonda North: Rhonda North Town Clerk.

Danny Davis: Danny Davis, Town Manager.

Bridge Littleton: Ok, all right. Well, as everybody knows, we're here tonight at a special meeting to hear presentations from two offerers. It sounds better than bidders. To looking at acquiring the Asbury Church and putting it back into reuse. And first up, tonight will be the Loudoun Freedom Center, and then that will be followed by the J Street LLC team at 7:30. Just a couple of level sets before we begin. Each group will be given 20 minutes to present their presentation. It'll be no interruption from council at all. The full 20 minutes is yours to use as you see fit. And then at the end of the 20 minutes, we have some questions. Not many, just a couple, some two questions that we're asking every applicant. And then a couple of questions specific to each application that came up in our first review of each of the proposals. And before we get started, though, what I would like to do, and I'll say this at the 7:30 session as well, I just want to thank everybody from the Loudoun Freedom Center for working as hard as you have to put together a proposal to bring Asbury Church back to its glory. We really appreciate the hard work, the diligence, the patience. This is government. And if one thing government does well is it goes slow, but it's a very important building to the town. It's part of our deep history. And we want to be incredibly diligent and forthright in making sure that we've assessed all

the facts and all the details from both sides and arrive at the overall best decision. So, again, we really thank you for the hard work. We really thank you for all your patience. I think we've started this process pre-COVID, and that's thrown a kink into everything. But we're here today. And again, we thank you guys for everything you've done from a process perspective. We're going to hear both proposals tonight. Council will not then deliberate at all tonight. As soon as the second briefing is done, we're going to be done. And the council, we each have our own scoring sheets based on the criteria that were in the RFP. And we'll start each of us doing our work to assess and evaluate. And then we'll probably meet several times over the next couple of weeks to finalize whatever decision the council may make, you know, whether it be moving forward with the Freedom Center, J Street, LLC, or not at all. I mean, that's still certainly possible. We may come back to you guys with some additional follow up written questions. Don't anticipate it, but you never know. But again, we thank you guys for being as responsive as you have with with this entire process. Our goal is to have a decision within the next four weeks. So we you know, we want to do it right and do it well and document it. But we do want to, you know, give everybody finality as to where we're going to be. So, again, thank you all so much. And with that, we will turn it over. Pastor Michelle we'll turn it over to you. However, whoever is going to brief or present and if you're handing off.

Robin Burke: Tag team here.

Bridge Littleton: So I tell you what, you tell us when to hit the. And Rhonda, do you want to do the clock? Oh, yes, ma'am.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: Can I ask one question? I understand the process. Got a question about the proposal. So has everyone had a chance to read the proposal? Yes. Okay. So making that.

Bridge Littleton: Yeah, yeah. Oh, absolutely. We came in. Yeah, we came in having read everybody's proposal. No, no, no. And honestly, it is your 20 minutes to review whatever you want to review, provide, talk about it or discuss. And I would say this to in in that 20 minutes, we're not going to interrupt you guys, but also, we want this to be your 20 minutes. So it's not to ask us questions at the end. We've got some questions. And if there's some little follow up, we can we can do that. So, Ok, you tell us when to hit start and we'll let it go.

Robin Burke: Let's it go. Go ahead and hit start.

Rhonda North: Hold on technical difficulties here.

Robin Burke: Okay. So good evening. My name is Robin Burke, and it's my honor to serve as the Executive Director of the Loudoun Freedom Center. Founded in 2015, the Loudoun Freedom Center is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and has been a trusted partner in the community and laser focused on the mission of eliminating injustice [inaudible] hope. Understanding and reconciling through STEM and IT education through research, history and historical preservation. The work of the Loudoun Freedom Center has been recognized not only locally but at the state level and the federal level, which has garnered widespread support, making us the best choice for this very important project. Again, thank you for the opportunity to present our plans for the adaptive reuse of the historic Asbury Church. The Loudoun Freedom Center supports the Middleburg Town Council's vision, the vision to revitalize this historic African American treasure so it can once again become the beacon of hope and unity here in the town of Middleburg. the Loudoun Freedom Center and the town of Middleburg and the town of Middleburg, I believe, are in lockstep. We know that our proposal contains a strong plan that is financially viable and demonstrates long term sustainability. All right. Tonight, we'd like to provide a brief history of the church, share our plans for the physical restoration and preservation of the church. Share with you some examples of our restoration and preservation projects right here in Loudoun County and our programmatic vision for the revitalized space. So the physical structure, as many of you all know, was built in 1929. Asbury is the oldest surviving church building in Middleburg and one of the oldest churches in the Northern Piedmont region here in Virginia. The structure was built for those who didn't want to worship with other denominations in the town, and the church was then called the Free Church and served the white congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. And I believe that they served that until the 19 or they worship there into the 1950s and in the 1950s they simply just built a new and larger church. And then that was constructed on Washington Street. And between 1857 and 1860, it was used for many purposes. It was used as a storage facility, a storehouse. It was a

government depot for grain and corn and which is very important in that shared history. It was a temporary morgue and hospital for not just the Confederate soldiers, but for the Confederate and Union soldiers during the Civil War. In 1864, the white congregation that owned the church donated it to the Black Methodist Episcopal Congregation, and the church became the first African American church in Middleburg. By 1866, the church was thriving. The church was renovated in 1880, and at that time an organ was added. The church bell was added, the pulpit was added, and at times the gallery, which is on the second floor, was used as a public school for to teach black children. Sunday school was held there. It was dining facilities there. It was just the kind of the heartbeat of the community, specifically the African American community that I. Sorry, sorry about that. And the church was then abandoned in 1994 when the congregation merged with the Williamsville Methodist Church congregation, and it presently sits vacant. All right. The Loudoun Freedom Center keenly understands the importance of preserving, protecting and promoting the rich African-American history, culture and legacy here in Middleburg. We are committed to the restoration, long term preservation and indefinite maintenance of the historic Asbury Church. The Loudoun Freedom Center recognizes that the town of Middleburg has invested significant financial resources in the stabilization of not only the exterior, but the interior of the church. And it is our plan to capitalize on that initial investment. We are absolutely committed to ensure that the historic Asbury Church will be restored to it's historic profile with no modifications to the traditional layout restoring and preserving the pulpit, the pews, the organ, the chandelier, and orchestrating the safe return of the church bell. We plan to hold weekly worship services, community programming, educational activities all in the main sanctuary. The second level will be restored again without changing any of the existing features or modifications to the traditional layout. And that will be used for educational and historic tours that will highlight the town of Middleburg while displaying artifacts, photos, permanent and temporary exhibits. We will partner with restoration and preservation experts. However, when we talk about this work, our key differentiator is sitting right there, Pastor Michelle Thomas. She is certified in public history and historic preservation and is one of only two African Americans holding these credentials in Loudoun County. In 2006, she was the first African American appointed to the Loudoun County Heritage Commission. She is qualified for this work, and in 2006, she was the first African American to establish a church here in Loudoun County. With that said, I would like to turn it over to Pastor Michelle TC Thomas, the founder and president of the Loudoun Freedom Center. You're more than welcome to clap.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: The best way to show our work is to really look at what we're doing already in the community. So let's watch a short video. This is Loudoun County Public Schools Video on professional development for their teachers.

[VIDEO] The teachers were involved in their piece of a field trip that we're doing with fourth grade students called The Journey to Freedom. And the Journey to Freedom was created in cooperation with Pastor Michelle Thomas and the Loudoun Freedom Center. And the purpose of the field trip is really to ask students the following question How can we, as students of history, investigate the untold African American history in Loudoun County? So we basically brought the teachers through exactly what the students would be doing. So the students will actually go to Belmont Plantation, look at the manor house, the grounds, look at the burial sites, both for the owners of Belmont Plantation and then the burial site for the enslaved at Belmont Plantation in the cemetery that was just recently discovered. This is four main features of every historic African-American community. The first feature would be a schoolhouse. Second would be a church. Third would be the living quarters or the residential part of the community, and fourth would be the cemetery. At Belmont we found all four. As we take tours, you're going to have to formulate your own questions and also be prepared because kids are sharper today than they've ever been. The second part of that day were the teachers looking at the actual lesson and going over the lesson that they'll be doing with the students. And the students are basically going to investigate and examine primary documents. And with those primary documents, they're going to piece together a narrative of the enslaved at Belmont Plantation. So this is a part of a bigger picture in Virginia. It's a bigger picture for a Loudoun County public school in the state of Virginia, because we're all looking at curriculum and we're looking at the state standards and we're all examining them to make them more culturally responsive and to tell the stories of all Americans so that our African American students in Virginia see themselves in American history. So I really like the students really for the first time to walk away with a better knowledge of the enslaved and the basically the resiliency of that group of people and the contributions that they made and the fact that we need to do a better job of honoring them in our American history and in our school systems.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: Imagine that possibility right here in Middleburg. Imagine people studying the shared history of Middleburg, the history of the Civil War, the history of soldiers, both Union and Confederate soldiers that are coming to this Asbury Church for healing and hope. Imagine that shared history where you tell the story of how the initial founders of this church wanted a interdenominational place to worship, a place that was for everyone. They didn't have the whole racism piece worked out. That came later. The Methodist Church decided that slavery was inconsistent with their faith. And so there was a split. And when they split, the church split, there was a vacancy and they literally left the church and scrapped everything in it. They literally took everything. And this resilient community came together to put in the beautiful chandeliers, the pews, the pulpit and everything that we see. It is our responsibility to not only preserve it, protect it, but to promote that shared history. There would be no Asbury and people that look like me without people that look like you. That's a phenomenal story to tell now in this time of great division in our history. And so I would invite you guys to look at projects. I certainly we submitted our proposal for consideration. You guys do this for a living, y'all. It's nothing. So you're going to have the widget people going through the widgets, you're going to have people going through the financial parts of it. But what I want to talk about today is really three things preservation, restoration and integration. the preservation of the church to be honest with you, you can partner with the greatest preservationist of all times. You can if you have enough money, you can do that. The Loudoun Freedom Center is solvent. We sent our numbers to you. We've tried this three. This is our third time. This is not our first rodeo with you guys. This is our third time. But this is the time where we actually got money. And in last year, 2021, we received a grant from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for \$255,000. Much of that will go to the refurbishing of this. We also include in our proposal is a grant letter that will be given from a benevolent supporter of \$250,000. So the question of do we have the money to do the restoration that is resolved now. The issue that I think is really most concerning is the issue of restoration in terms of programming and preserving in terms of programming. Anybody can put the building back together if you have enough care and education. But to tell the story, preserving the Asbury story, to tell it in a way that it is true for in the way that it is inclusive, in the way that it is comprehensive, to tell it from the voices of those people that have been silenced and often not sat at the table to be able to tell their stories. That is why the Loudoun Freedom Center is probably the best is the best choice. And you can see we have partnerships intact. Let's just go through our partnerships. These are preservation and revitalization projects that you can see. And you're probably already familiar with. One of the, one group in the preservation is cemeteries and sacred burial ground. So we've been throughout the county. The African American burial ground for the enslaved at Belmont was our first project. That is right now a main feature and attraction to Loudoun County. We actually get more visitors unfortunately, my son passed and he's buried there, so I think that helped with the traffic. But we probably get more visitors. We get more visitors than the Loudoun Museum. We get a lot of visitors. On a weekly basis there's probably about 100 people that come through that. Not only that, we have done tours with Loudoun County Public Schools and tours with students, and we originally started off with fourth grade students. Now we are doing high school students and we also educate teachers and we'll be a part of their orientation programs. So we have the burial ground at Belmont. We also have [inaudible]. We have the Tibbets Hill Cemetery that we've revitalized for the church revitalization we partnered up with Waterford Church to do the John Wesley. Obviously, they did the preservation work, restoring the outside, but they just couldn't get over the programming hump. They didn't they weren't able to do what institutionally we know how to do. When I say we African-Americans, we understand homecoming. We know homecoming is a great phenomenon in the black church and so to get people to come out and share generationally in food and worship and fellowship, that's what we've done for that John Wesley Church. And we have those annual homecomings every year. We also have done lynch memorials. So the Ryan Anderson Lynch Memorial that is in Leesburg. And we also have two more Lynch memorials that we will get done this year. Charles Craven and Paige Wallace. We do the Journey to Freedom Heritage Trail. And this Heritage Trail is very new. We're working in conjunction with the Civil War Trails. Visit Loudoun and Loudoun County Parks and Recs. And so everywhere you see the Civil War trail, if there is African American history associated with it, we will have the Journey to freedom heritage trail telling that African American history. So Basil Newman Park is where we will have one of our trails, Belmont Freedom Trail, Lansdown Freedom Trail, Oak Grove just in two weeks will open there this first sort of joint venture with the Freedom Trail at Oak Grove. We also have Journey to Freedom Heritage Tours that is open to the public, also teachers and students. We get lots of traffic with students pre-COVID. We're probably we probably did about 2000 students pre-COVID with these tours. Our education and our professional development and our outdoor museums. Those ticket items are so important because this is how we keep the community intact with the history and make sure that the history is not disruptive and that is just educating. Most people don't understand that there was a coexistence in this community. There is a shared history unlike any other history in Loudoun County.

Middleburg is rich with shared history. And so to be able to tell those stories, to be able to bring generations and descendant communities together, hand in hand, to sit and tell those stories of revitalization. I think that's fantastic lesson planning and coaching. We use these historic sites as a matter of planning and teacher coaching, right? So it's difficult to talk about history when you can't see it or touch it. And so this makes it real. This gives students a great place to visit. I'm going to digress now. I only have 2 minutes. Can you just play this last video and I'll sit down and take your [inaudible]

Robin Burke: This one launches me to Channel four. You may see a commercial.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: Can I reclaim my time?

Robin Burke: Keep talking.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: So this commercial literally shows the children. They show what would happen in Middleburg. They show what would happen at the Asbury Church where children

[VIDEO]

Pastor Michelle Thomas: No, don't worry. Let's just stop it and we'll send it to them. They'll watch it on their own time. I'm so sorry. Okay, we'll email it. That's fine. And so basically what you would have seen was the children visiting. And this is how a typical visit goes. You imagine this beautiful sanctuary, all revitalized and having kids to come into that space, the sacredness of it. I am my father was a pastor. I'm third generation. I'm probably going to be playing the organ as they enter into this church or we'll have music and then imagine telling the shared history. Imagine them going upstairs to see where young children have their Sunday school lessons, coming back downstairs, watching more video and interactive talks and just. Ok. But and some of the programmatic opportunities would be the homecoming day. Emancipation Day is something that we want to celebrate. Juneteenth. Black History Month. We have three main thrusts a refuge in a time of war. Our story, our song, a place of worship for all. And lastly, restoring the soul of Middleburg. That is what we're about. That is what we want to bring to you guys in Middleburg. That's what we're going to do.

Bridge Littleton: Thank you. [applause]

Rhonda North: And she and she hit it right on the clock.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: I'm a preacher. I normally go over, but that's ok.

Bridge Littleton: Well, so first, thank you all very much. Excellent presentation. Really appreciate all the vision, scope and effort you guys have put into this. So if you can grab a seat if you want. We've got OK. We've got a couple of questions. Some of them are general questions. We're asking both teams. And then some of them were specific to each proposal. So the first question and by all means feel completely free to say, you know, great question, can we get back to you in writing or whatever, you know, because we didn't give these to you in advance and, you know, we don't want you to wing it. So but this is just sort of come up in the last couple of days in terms of reviewing your proposals. So Ok number one, the Asbury property has some significant stormwater drainage issues and especially during heavy rains affecting the downhill neighbors from the church. Will you all commit to addressing that adequately? And I know adequately is a big you know, an engineer's got to look at it, but it's a significant issue.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: It is a significant issue. I've been following that. We also have stormwater drainage issue at our property in [inaudible], and so we are absolutely familiar with that. The way that we have addressed that is through digging two trenches on both sides. But we use our interns with Virginia Tech. And so they have been so our landscape students have been so helpful with providing plans. And so if it is that we're going to get this property, we're going to address that. And we're also going to address it with the Virginia Tech students. They were the ones that came up with the plan for [inaudible] and that got us over that hurdle of stormwater management. Yes, sir.

Bridge Littleton: Great. Thank you. Second one is and everybody talked about in their proposal a little bit, but it still is it's going to be an ongoing challenge. Parking is going to be a challenge. Given your all's proposed use, how do you really plan to address parking? Because in our experience, nobody wants to walk further than a block. You know, so that's that's going to be a significant challenge. And again, if you if it's we'll get back to you, that's fine. But if you guys got it, go ahead.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: So there's a couple of things that's happening. Obviously, you guys know that since the pandemic, most churches are not at full capacity. Most churches have a hybrid solution. Our church absolutely has a hybrid solution, and I do not expect that to ever change. So the full capacity of having the building completely full. Even [inaudible] can't fill up a black church, and that's the best preacher in America. But that's one if that's one of the issues we know that there is a hybrid model. So the required parking is not as what it was pre-COVID, but for the parking that's needed, we're going to use parking garages, all the parking spaces that are available to us. Also, we're going to partner with Shiloh Baptist Church. So Shiloh Baptist Church, just like many of the churches, they're suffering, right? So and their church is at 11. They do not have two services. The church service that we're planning to hold in Middleburg will be early morning service. It is those people who are at Salamander and they just like to get up early and go. They don't want to spend two or 3 hours in a church service. So you're talking about a 90 minute at the most church service. Probably 60 is more realistic. And so we're going to use public spaces. We also will utilize our shuttle. So our church has a van and will utilize our shuttle to pick people up where they park, and especially if they're elderly. Ok and the physical building will be open on a hybrid model as well if you guys are still concerned about parking.

Bridge Littleton: Okay, perfect. So now that next, three questions. Wait is it three? Yeah, [inaudible]

Pastor Michelle Thomas: Can I ask one more thing?

Bridge Littleton: Sure, sure, sure.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: In our proposal, we did make a suggestion about some parking that could be included. I know in other proposals before they've had, they've asked for two or three parking spaces right next to the church. And so if that is an option, I just want to put that there.

Bridge Littleton: Okay. Yeah, no, I mean, I think on public streets is tough because it's a public street.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: There's a little space on the side.

Bridge Littleton: Yeah, we can. We can. We can look at what's what options we have. So Ok next three questions. First question was this. In your all's proposal, you outline that after 15 years there, if the restoration wasn't be able to be completed, there'd be a mediation agreement. Can you give us some more detail? What form and what you mean by that in actual practice? So what would that actually boil down to?

Pastor Michelle Thomas: This is actually a proposal, if it is warranted or necessary, if you needed some or felt as if you needed some additional leverage in a way to make sure that the preservation is going to actually take place then we put in a mediation. So after about 15 years, let me tell you how we came up with that number. So the price of goods and services and equipment and everything, it's just through the roof, it's pandemic. And so things will adjust, things will adjust. And so if you want to go ahead and build everything out right now, it's going to cost you an arm and a leg. You could do a lot of the pre work that needs to be done assessing the building and that sort of thing. You can take the first couple of years doing that, let the prices for wood and different equipment that you're going to need kind of level set and then you can get into it. If it looks like we're running into a hard time, we have another pandemic. It's COVID number 16. You know, I wanted to build in some time because who would ever think we would be out of business for two years? And so I wanted to build in some realistic time. So after a period of about 15 years, nothing is done. You just see the building the same way you left it. Then it's time for us to come back to the table. It's time for us to say, Hey, listen, are you really serious? Do you have a plan? What is your impediment for not being able to move this project forward? And then we would go into a process of mediation. All right. So we tell you what the impediments

are and we sit down and we talk about some realistic terms. And maybe at that time, the town is in great position. Maybe you could say, hey, Pastor Michelle, we can help you do X, Y, Z, I don't know, but that's a part of mediation. And then we work those terms out. I would imagine that that mediation should take no longer than three years, no longer than three years. If at that point that there's mediation and you see progress in the next two years, then we should be fine. It's no need to come back on that because we're back on track. After two years after our mediation, you haven't seen any progress. Then we'll offer up a solution where you can get the property back. Maybe we're not in a position to do it. Maybe it's not going to happen. I don't know. I do not foresee that being an issue. I am tied to all of our property and when I say tied, I'm talking about I'm willing to do. I will bet the farm on it. And you guys know what that means. I'll bet the farm on it. I will do everything in my power to make sure that Asbury Church is restored. One, because I'm a pastor. Number two, I believe in preservation. If we ever needed a church, we need it right now.

Bridge Littleton: Perfect. Ok next question was in reviewing y'all's revenue model. This is sort of how we want to. Number one, confirm we read it. Right. And just make sure that we fully understand it. So it said the following that you guys anticipate 10,000 visitors annually. You know, so church is all done. It's the programming is going on. And you're expecting 10,000 paying visitors per year. So and I think you all said in the proposal, you propose to be open three days during the week and one day during the weekend, which I would assume would not be the service day. [off mic]

Bridge Littleton: Okay. Right. Perfect. Ok. Good. So if so, if we just did the math, we did the math backwards, that would come out to the projection of 48 visitors per day that it was open. So about 50 visitors a day. Could you give us some details on how you all arrived at that number.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: [inaudible] holds around 52 children, 50 to 54 children. And so that is scheduling three school busses, three trips per week. And that is very doable given the amount of schools we have in Loudoun County, given the amount of schools in Loudoun County, that is a very acceptable number, not just for elementary school education, but again, we also service US history and different social sciences. So they also have a new African American studies course that they just brought online and they are going to do this tour. So we have the students and the capacity to do it. The only thing that will be an issue is COVID, right? And so.

Bridge Littleton: Oh, sure. I mean, not you know, let's just assume we're back to normal.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: Yeah, back to normal.

Bridge Littleton: Whatever normal is going to look like for the next hundred years till the next pandemic.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: And so we're only just talking about students here. So we only use the model of students. We're not talking about, you know, you know, other community groups that would come in or even teachers in their professional development.

Robin Burke: Well, we did it, dude. We did do a little modeling on classes, conferences and symposiums.

Bridge Littleton: Okay.

Robin Burke: Using that basis, similar numbers.

Bridge Littleton: Okay, great. Thank you. And then the last question we had was and you may have addressed it as you went through everything, but it was a question that was here, so I turned it off. Under the timeline and the budget, the proposal states that after 15 years, the restoration has not been completed. The town and Loudoun Freedom Center would enter into mediation to potentially return the church.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: We're going to enter into mediation to get the work done.

Bridge Littleton: Or to get the work done. Got you. Got you. Right. And then it's and then this was so this is where the question goes. Do we interpret that it could take up to 15 years to restore the property?

Pastor Michelle Thomas: No, no.

Bridge Littleton: No, no, no. Not that it would. No, but that it could.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: You know, I can't answer that Bridge. I can't say that. Right. So it's a lot of things that we could we could think about. But given this whole pandemic, I don't know. I do not believe that it's going to take 15 years. We are not looking at that sort of timeframe. We want to get this in the public view as soon as possible. We want to create a civil war sort of designation for this, a shared history. So that Loudoun Freedom Trail that I was talking about, we want this to be a designated site. It has the best history in Middleburg. And so we're going to be working to that end. It's not going to take us 15 years.

Robin Burke: Could I ask a follow up question? I guess, what is the concern in the question?

Bridge Littleton: So I think the way to phrase it is so you guys came up with a project timeline and I guess I think the way maybe it was viewed was if you're asking for 15 years to restore it, that you then think it's a possibility it might take 15 years.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: No, the ask is not for 15 years to restore it. The ask is to make sure that it's being restored. And if you see that it is not, then we have a time frame in which we're going to deliberate. So but that is not ask for 15 years.

Bridge Littleton: Okay. And so the second piece of question you guys already addressed earlier, so those were the only questions we had.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: Yeah. So given the fact that we have the budget, given the fact that we have collaboration inside of our proposal, we have the support of many different people. Do you have the letter?

Bridge Littleton: So, so real quickly. Yes. Everybody only gets 20 minutes. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. It's not that. It's not that at all. It's just we want to be fair to everybody. Same amount of time. But any extra stuff you guys want to provide or email us or drop off with Rhonda or anything like that by all means. You know, and also copy your presentation. If your remarks were written and you want to give us the written remarks, you can do that as well. Okay. I don't think yours were written, though.

Pastor Michelle Thomas: No. Thank you so much for your time and your attention.

Bridge Littleton: Thank you all very much. Ok, we're now going to take a 15 minute break. So, Rhonda, are we just going to go into recess for 15 minutes? Okay. We'll go into recess for 15 minutes and then we'll have the second proposers go at 7:30. Thank you. That's not saying much. All right. We will call the meeting back to order. Are we good with Philip and everything?

Rhonda North: Philip is still on the line.

Bridge Littleton: Is he there?

Rhonda North: I don't know. He's turned his camera off.

Bridge Littleton: Philip you there?

Rhonda North: He's there.

Bridge Littleton: Ok. Ok. Thank you, everybody, for coming in again. Appreciate it. I will restate what I said at the beginning of the meeting at 6:30 for the other team who's coming in to offer their presentation. Thank you all very much for coming tonight. We really appreciate it. We appreciate all the hard work that everybody's put into putting forward some great proposals. So are the rules of the road. So you all will have 20 minutes to use as you see fit. No questions to council, but no questions from council. Again, present however you want. If it's multiple people and handing off again, this is your 20 minutes to highlight or provide additional information in in your proposal to the council. Once that's done, we do have two general questions that we asked the other proposers as well that we're going to ask you guys. And then we have some specific questions about your proposal, which I've collected from council and I'll ask directly. Council's not going to deliberate at all tonight the that when everything's done with the Q&A at the end of your briefing, we're going to adjourn the meeting and and be done. Council has read your proposal. That's where some of the questions have come from. And then our goal is to, within the next month, have a decision on which way we're going to proceed. And again, it will be one or the other, or maybe potentially neither. So, but that's where we are. It's been a long process. Again, we thank everybody for all their hard work diligence. The one thing I will absolutely say is it is clear that everybody genuinely really cares about what happens to the future of Asbury. And we really appreciate the heartfelt efforts from from all. As the next month goes by and we make we do our deliberations and work towards a decision we may follow up with additional questions in writing. Maybe not. But again, just putting it out there so everybody knows sort of the rules of the road. So with that, if you guys are ready, let us know when you're ready to begin. And we have a nice little shot clock right here. So. And but again, the 20 minutes is yours, however. Wish you however you guys wish to take it. Awesome.

Brett Gable: All right. Well, thank you all for having us. We really appreciate it. And thank you for your service to the community. I know it's a thankless job and we really do appreciate you doing what you do. I'm Brett Gable. I have been raised in Loudoun County. My funny for you is it's my dad's fault. You guys have that wonderful eight person deep Christmas parade. In about 1981-82, Dad decided he was Master Middleburg hounds. He was going to run the hunt right through town, first time ever not chasing a fox. And my sister and my mother were standing in front of the red fox, and that was about it. And now look what you guys have done with it. It's awesome. What a great community effort. I moved back to Loudoun after going to school and working in Washington a little bit, 1998 to work for Middleburg Bank. I've renovated many historic homes and commercial buildings, including 20 West Market Street, which used to be called the Lower Brigade, 1700 stone houses. Howardsville Cabin. We're also in the middle right now of working with Loudoun Water and Loudoun County to put in a sewer plant for all the houses in Howardsville, which some of the houses currently do not have any facilities inside, which is a shame. Done a lot of buildings in Berryville and other places in downtown Leesburg, 28 West Street and 211 Loudoun. Was on the [Inaudible] board for nine years. The National Trust for Historic Preservation Property was chairman. I was on the United Way board for Loudoun County. I've been a Rotarian for 25 years in Leesburg, Treasurer of Trinity Church, Hapeville and Brian and I are both on a perfunctory subcommittee of Wendy Hill Foundation for some of their different boards, where they have to have different folks on different boards. They can't have one board for everything. My wife and children live in Bloomfield, Virginia, and my kids went to Banneker Elementary, and I'm an avid outdoorsman. I'll hand it off to Bridget

Bridget Wilson: My name is Bridget Wilson and I have lived in this community since 1996 when I married my husband, Brian Wilson. I have owned and operated retail business in Middleburg, Virginia, downtown local for the past 20 years, which I can't believe. I had the Magic Wardrobe, which was a children's clothing store, and I had stores in many different locations, but in Georgetown, and we had quite a bit of experience renovating historic buildings at that time because we renovated the old Hockman building, and then as well in Georgetown, we had to do some pretty major renovations down there. I currently so I had the Magic Wardrobe. I have four children, they attend local schools. We're very entrenched in the community here. And I currently own a fitness studio which is called Native Bar Studios, and I have had that since 2010. And I have operated in my space near the Asbury Church for eight years. And I will I have I donate a lot of my time. I've been on the board of Windy Hill. I've chaired their auction, I've chaired the auctions at the Hill School, and I work with a place to be quite often and donate our space and I will pass it off. So gives you a general idea. And this is my husband, Brian Wilson.

Brian Wilson: Thank you. Hi. I've been a part of this community since I was a year and a half old. Mother and father moved from Puerto Rico to Middleburg in 1973. Grew up with seeing the community and and the people in it. And I

have a background in real estate development recently been renovating starting in 2002 a 648 units community in Southwest DC near the new baseball stadium that's been ongoing. It's never done. But so that's been one of the things that I think I can bring to this project is a lot of experience dealing with unforeseen issues that come up with old buildings. And so I think that that's enough about me, but I think we want to get jump in to our presentation and let's make sure it's up here.

Brett Gable: So this is really almost perfunctory because everyone in this room knows about the history of the Asbury Church, but we included it in case this gets shared with others. But 190 years of history, Asbury Church was established in 1829, it was used as a white Methodist Episcopal Church, as a storehouse, a government depot, a hospital during the Civil War. Right after the Civil War, it educated 62 African-American children in Middleburg, 57, of whom had perfect attendance in their school and learned to read and write. Pretty amazing. And then it was a black Methodist Episcopal Church until 1994. It was fun going into the Thomas Balch Library and getting Gene's book and reading all about it. It was amazing, really. The population of Middleburg hasn't changed that much in a little over 100 years, and it's very exciting.

Brian Wilson: This is the. Next slide back. Sorry.

Bridget Wilson: No we just skipped ahead.

Brian Wilson: We really did practice this. So our purpose for 105 J Street, LLC really is simple is to restore the Asbury Church, preserve its important history of the church, and to reopen the building for the entire community, for various uses. And that is part of our plan is is fully funded, not the 105 J Street, LLC is fully funded and can complete the renovations in a timely manner starting immediately. We partner with Native Bar Studios as our anchor tenant as part of the the business plan. We plan to keep the architectural integrity of the building, both interior and exterior of the building, as close as the original design as possible. And this is possible because of the very light footprint of Bridget's studio. And Bridget can speak to its nature. It's not a heavy use. It doesn't have a lot of machines if no one's ever worked out there, I encourage you to do it.

Bridget Wilson: So my studio Native Bar Studios, I opened in 2010 and then with Tom Sweitzer, we renovated the building that we're currently in now behind the Exxon building, and I have been there for eight years. We run our studio in a big open space, so there's nothing in the middle. It's just a big open space. And we use lightweights and just light mats and very little equipment. We use our own bodies to do most of the workout. So it allows us in our off times and we typically operate early in the mornings, really early in the morning and are done around noon or 1:00 in the afternoon. So we have an enormous amount of time that's just sort of sitting there. And so in the past, I have donated my space quite a bit to different, you know, little ballerinas want to come and do things there or a place to be. But Native Bar pre-COVID, we had approximately 800 members, 430 women coming every week. And now we have a good two or 300. But we survived through COVID pretty easily. My clientele is very loyal and we, you know, every day I see new people coming back and with all the new people coming into the town, we just get new people all the time. So with that said, I wanted to share some examples of how we give back to the community and a specific example. Kim Tapper at A Place To Be wrote this letter, and I feel like it's important that I read it because it really shows that we have a track record, that we're not just talk and that we actually have and will continue to give back to the community and share our space. So Kim says to the town of Middleburg, I am writing to share the generosity that Bridget Wilson has displayed to us at A Place to Be over the last few years. We are neighbors in the building, and on multiple occasions Bridget has offered us the use of her Native Bar Studio at no charge and often at last minute on request, a last minute request on our part. She allows us to use the space for various community events we hold, such as parent education forums and for times that we need additional space to help accommodate an overflow of client participation in our program. Each time Bridget was flexible, agreeable and generous in her offer and support. We believe she makes a good steward for any space in the community and will open it up to community usage for shared missions and connections for all. And this slide prior is just showing another example of how Native Bar is asked every year to do the warm up for the [inaudible] cherry blossom breast cancer walk and some other other events too. So and now I will pass it on to Brad to discuss how we will help.

Brett Gable: So we're hoping to have it be a vibrant part of the community and used for education and use for tours and educating children. We'd like to have Brian's going to get into some of the signage and some of our our electronic stuff. I was able to go down and I talked with [inaudible] and I went down to Thomas Balch and read his book and on Middleburg, which is fantastic. If you haven't read it, it's a little detailed, but it's very good and had a lot of references to Asbury Church. And Gene asked And I agree that throughout the renovation and then after it's done, Gene is planning in the fall of 2022 to bring come to Asbury Church. If by then it has changed over to us and he'll bring his educators that he educates, he brings Loudoun County teachers in so they can teach the history of what's going on in our community. And he loves the being able to touch and feel and be there in that space. And we'll encourage local schools to come, whether it's Loudoun County, Fauquier County, even Clark and then all the private and the charter school, of course, in town.

Brian Wilson: Okay. So I'm sure everybody has a telephone. If you don't, you could share your neighbors. But if you scan the QR code and recently I learned what QR stands for. It's quick reference so I didn't realize that so quick reference code. So what happens is you scan that and in your phone you can pull up the website that we've created for Asbury Church and there's a video that will walk through the church, and our plan is to have the website be the repository of all of the information that we can gather from all of the families. The history of Asbury Church will be on this website, and it'll be constantly going, going from the time that we hopefully get awarded the church going forward, we'll have all of a collaboration with the Friends of Asbury Church Board has agreed to really spearhead that part, to make sure that all of the information that is out there can be collected and and concentrated on that website. So that when you go to the the website, you can see not only the renovation and progress, but during that time, we can also start to to bring together all of the information that we found. For instance, every sash in the church has a nameplate from a family, and so each one of those can be loaded onto the website and research can be done to kind of pull that information back together and so that all of those things can be preserved. And so the upstairs of this church, we're going to dedicate portions of you can see kind of a little bit.

Brett Gable: But instead of a fixed sign that is automatically almost out of date when you finish it, this can be a living, breathing, growing, vibrant piece.

Brian Wilson: Right. And so we're going to have the the artifacts that belong in the church in a dedicated part upstairs that people can come and touch and feel and actually go visit. And of course, because we have such a flexible open space, the space itself is is able to be used when Native Bar isn't utilizing it. So that that part of the website, though, is important because what I realized is when I went on to do the research of the the Asbury Church and educate myself, a lot of the information is is really been written fairly recently. And and there's a lot of history, I think, going back from its founding and all of the different uses that can be really brought together on this website.

Bridget Wilson: And I have the opportunity to sit and talk with some of the leaders of the friends of the Asbury Church and maybe discuss some of these ideas. And I think what's so special about using this QR code is that, for instance, you could take someone's memory, it could be loaded up onto the site. They can listen and hear the stories and the memories can be preserved and listened to. So it's ever changing. And it's something where immediately upon the renovation beginning, well, actually already we've started the website, it will be fully funded and the content can start to be built because really online you can find very little information on the church. And so at any time, anywhere in a classroom, anywhere you can, you can really learn about the church and part and our community. So cool.

Brian Wilson: Now I don't know how to get back to the other one.

Bridget Wilson: Yeah, but we do know how to use a QR code.

Brett Gable: So our last slide is action, and we really encourage you to act. Now, the town of Middleburg has been truly an incredible steward of the property. The shoring up the roof, the different work you've done already has been wonderful. I fear where it would be right now if you hadn't done the steps you've done. So thank you. We look forward to making the property a vibrant asset to the citizens and the community. We really see it being a repository for all this information and coming together and being a fantastic, useful space that can go on to be an additional asset for the community in a space that maybe is too expensive when folks are looking at their alternatives, [inaudible] hall and the

community center, I think it can really be a wonderful, wonderful gathering place and a real good spot for the community. And the light footprint about which Bridget mentioned makes it so our use is very compatible with our ongoing goals of making it something for the community to share and have it and making sure it's open. We'd like, if it's all right to have you said we could have somebody come up and say hi. Carol Lee and Rucker Slater, could you come up? This is my friend and banker, Mr. Rucker Slater and Mrs. Carol Lee.

Rucker Slater: I'm Rucker Slater, I'm with Oak View National Bank and I've been working with Brett actually, Brett, Bridget and Brian since the late nineties, starting in Middleburg Bank. And then Marshall Bank and then over to Oak View Bank right now, which is in Marshall and. The projects that Brad mentioned at the very beginning, I think we've done at least six or eight different projects from renovating structures to a lot of land work with other types of preservation, that everything is going great. They're immensely qualified, very detail oriented. It makes my job easy on the banking side to get through it. And so I highly recommend them from a financial standpoint, at least from a planning standpoint. They do what they say they're going to do and get things done. And I'm fortunate enough to be involved with Brett and a couple of clubs and Gene Shield and the research and the things that we talk about at these meetings, this just falls naturally into, I think his interest is being a lifetime Loudoun resident, so it feels very appropriate and I couldn't recommend them anymore.

Brett Gable: Thanks, Rucker. We're in the [inaudible] farmers club together. The oldest farming club in America. Please come to a meeting. Carol can you come up?

Jennifer: I'll say something on behalf of Carol. I'm Carol's daughter, Jennifer. And when we were young, the Willisville children would come down in the summers to Asbury Church for Project Second Chance and just a whole bunch of church community events. So I'm related to Asbury through Willisville. So to us they were always sister churches. So as our generation, I hope that whoever gets it does well with preserving it and making good use of it, maybe doing something that includes the children of today. We're all grown and we've all moved away, but that church is very symbolic to us in our religious growings and teaching. So I hope you all make a great decision, and I hope whoever gets it does a very good job with it. T

Carol Lee: Do I have to come up here?

Brett Gable: No, I can bring it to you.

Carol Lee: My name is Carol Lee, and I'm with Willisville. Willisville Preservation Foundation. Like my daughter said, the church Asbury Church was connected with Willisville for years and years, and there were a lot of activities that went on there. I have inquired about the Asbury Church. What different want to do with it. My vision of the church is to give back to the community. My biggest vision for the church is to we can't afford to rent the community center or just to have a dinner or just to have anything not to take away from Shiloh putting another church there, because that church is struggling, too, but give back to the community where the community could afford to rent it for different functions. That also there may be a dream for Mrs. Louis Library to come, not just to see stuff on the Internet, walk into the building, be able to see the history of our surrounding areas, all of our little towns Willisville, Taylor Town, all of it. See all the history of it. Austin Grove. Right, everybody. And give back. You know, we can't afford to do a lot of stuff and whoever gets it, I hope they think about giving back to the community, not just a business to make a big.

Brett Gable: So that's our sustainable offer for the community in fixing up Asbury Church.

Brian Wilson: 57 seconds left.

Bridge Littleton: I'm sure you don't want to do something at that time. I mean, Michelle got it down to 2 seconds. No, I'm not kidding. I'm kidding. But no, no. You guys stay right there. So as I said before, thank you all very much. Really appreciate it. Appreciate everybody else coming out as well. It's very helpful for us as we figure out the right path to go. So got two general questions and then a couple of specific questions to your all's proposal. And again, we may we may email some follow up questions and stuff like that. So the first question is Asbury Church has a stormwater

drainage problems for the residents who live down the hill from it and which would be neighbors from neighbors of the church. Will you all commit to adequately to addressing the stormwater management issue adequately?

Brett Gable: Yeah, I'll take that. We I do a lot of water projects. I do a lot of stream banks and wetland mitigation. One of my partners is Hydrological Engineer Masters at Tech. So what we would do is work with the town for a plan that would mitigate it. As you know, the property line and the gutters currently go right out at the edge of the property into the Grahams, into the old community center. So we would have to probably work with the community, the town, because there probably have be some sharing of that as literally the down spouts about goes down, goes three feet and then in so be difficult to do a water retention on something only three feet wide. The short answer is yes. We will work with that to make sure it is done and participate in that in every in any way possible. We have met with some landscape architects about how we can take the left side of the power line of superstructure got moved, we could move some water around and get it back into the drain, to the front and to the water, stormwater sewers. And that way it would alleviate some of that right off. We did look at some plans and ideas there. We're hoping that the sidewalk can be finished and then we could get the drainage right and control. But the answer is yes and we think that you could get some yes.

Bridge Littleton: Ok next question is parking's always going to be a challenge down there. How do you all plan to address parking given the proposed use?

Brian Wilson: Yeah, there's we took a really close look at the current use and Bridget only has two spaces as it is, and a lot of her clientele come from and walk from the community. But they also utilize early morning. They park on the street. But the church itself also has enough room, we believe, to have some additional off street parking on the left side, which would be the the north side. This would also incorporate at least one, possibly two handicapped spaces that would have an approach in from that side directly into the church for obviously for handicapped use. So that I think that we could address the parking and, you know, I wouldn't commit to how many parking spaces we could get in there. But I believe it's it's significantly more than what Bridget has now.

Bridge Littleton: One sec. Okay. So the next couple of questions are specific to your proposal. So the town and again and it was also the same with Pastors Michelle's presentation. These questions came from your proposal. So some of these questions you may have actually already addressed in your in your presentation. So if you want to expand, highlight whatever or just say, yeah, we've already covered that, that's fine. And also, as I mentioned to other group, if it is, you know, great question. Don't have the answer right now, but can we get back to you? That's fine. So the first question, the town is interested in respecting and promoting the church and the town's African-American heritage. How do you propose to accomplish that? And have you had any discussions with any of as Asbury's former congregants?

Brett Gable: Carol Lee was the last trustee of Asbury Church. And we've talked with her extensively.

Bridget Wilson: And I've met with friends, at least some leaders of the friends of the Asbury Church a couple of times and a couple of conversations on the telephone and how we can work together. And I feel we can really align with what they're interested in doing and seeing happen for the future of the church.

Bridge Littleton: Okay, next one. Oh will adding and this is an assumption we'll adding valet bars and mirrors cause any long term damage to the structure or do these are these intended to be temporary or removable fixtures?

Brett Gable: I just finished a renovation of a log cabin from the 1700s. And what we did is instead of having to dig into the 1800s part of the house or the 1700s part of the house on the 1800s for the house, and Brian came up with it. But I had done it and it was a good idea for this as well. We're just working with some folks about how the mortar and stone will react to it. So we're just trying to make sure we get the right mix. We have to put maybe ironically, tiebacks on the inside to protect it from the moisture wicking out. But we were thinking about perhaps not really for beauty, but perhaps doing a very thin two by four wall with drywall all the way around on the interior to use as a chase for such for power, water, whatever it needs to be. So any mirrors or bars that would be added would not be into the superstructure of the stone. And furthermore, we've also talked about maybe having this available for fundraisers, for different

community events and they could have maybe an art gallery and have the second floor have art. And we were thinking about doing picture molding so nothing goes into the walls and making it so that the aforementioned mirrors could either, if it's appropriate for it, if that is even what Bridget ends up doing, you could either hang art on that or you could cover it and then have it be used for a religious ceremony or something like that.

Bridge Littleton: Okay. Next one here. Okay. In your proposal. It said that, you know, if the town reached agreement and turned the property over, that you estimate restoration to be complete within six months. So is that a reasonable timeline given the current building environment? I mean, like supply chain, COVID, all that kind of stuff.

Brett Gable: We have four bids and estimates that we worked through to the point where we had to stop based on not being in control. At some point, people don't really want to talk to you anymore and spend money. They spend their time and effort if you're not getting it. So. I think in the last proposal, the one I emailed, we said nine. Just trying to hedge bets a little. I would say once permits are started, it's not a terribly invasive renovation. Thanks to you, the roof and the gutters are done. You've got to do some water storm work. We've got to get permits, you know. So I wouldn't count permits in my timeline. I say once the county and the town are okay with the permits, I mean, and then we're talking about the walls, power, a little plumbing. We're not talking about putting in a commercial kitchen or anything. We're going to renovate the two bathrooms that are there and make a little change to that. We're going to keep the windows. We're talking about maybe doing, in essence, an interior storm window.

Brian Wilson: Right. So we want to keep the exterior, although the town fortunately put in some on the the the sunniest side, newer windows. So those I think the front is the key is that what we want to do is to make sure it's weatherproof, do an interior storm window type system so that we can keep the old exterior intact. So it will look the same always, but relatively speaking, you know, with supply chain issues and things like that. If we have permits in hand.

Brett Gable: We can work in parallel. We can do the walls, the plumbing, electrical, close it up with drywall at the same time have the HVAC being used. The HVAC companies also we can use the current ducts. The ducts were, I think the whole AC and everything was redone in the eighties. So it's got a pretty darn good duct system. They'll just have to be thoroughly cleaned and I think it can be used. So a lot of groundwork is remarkably solid.

Bridge Littleton: Okay, last question. Your business model has a tenant willing to move in once completed and provide a revenue stream, which would be your exercise business. But what are the plans and what have you guys thought about in terms of several years down the road if that's not meeting your revenue or profitability goals?

Brett Gable: So mathematically, we were thinking that Native Bar would cover ongoing operational costs. And you know, Brian, my wife Melinda, Bridget and I have talked about the not for profit groups getting the building for free or maybe a cleaning fee if they can't afford. So put in a number on it, that's reasonable. But if they can't afford it, making it so it's available, just making sure they pay a cleaning fee. So when Bridget's group comes on Monday morning, it's ready to roll and she doesn't have to worry about taking care of a glass of soda water. That said we could maybe get a different tenant. Bridget's only had businesses in the town of Middleburg for an excess of 20 years, so I don't think she's going anywhere.

Brian Wilson: What I think, too, is that the idea is that Bridget also her rent is going to cover a significant portion of the initial cost of the renovation and then the from the revenue stream of special events will then go to pay down the the principal. And so, you know, relatively speaking, in a short amount of time, we expect it to be debt free effectively. So that is not burdened with a lot of debt and has no ability to make changes in its business model.

Brett Gable: So but Bridget's not only the tenant, she's also an owner. So, I mean, if Middleburg bank decides to not become a bank anymore, what are we going to do with the big empty bank in the middle of town? I mean, you know.

Bridge Littleton: No. Understood. Understood. Bowling alley, right? Oh, thank you.

Brian Wilson: We had a bowling alley.

Brett Gable: Come on, bring it back to the community center Duckpin.

Brian Wilson: Which is where the Native Bar actually started its first classes.

Bridget Wilson: Well, and I think, you know, a testament to my business is, you know, during COVID, there were so many fitness studios and so many small businesses that didn't make it through. And we easily paid our rent. We have always I mean, I have a huge following. We have I mean, hundreds of women that come to the studio. And I think in that picture and a few men, a few men, we're getting them in. But I feel like if we could make it through that as well as we did, I'm not really concerned, you know, going forward. But I mean.

Brett Gable: I understand the question.

Brian Wilson: Yeah, yeah. As lifelong member of the community. I'll stand by the fact that I will make sure that it's it's always taken care of.

Bridge Littleton: And I actually missed one question. So and you're in the part of your proposal you talked about under education and you've already talked about Miss Taylor Cook, but have you all already also reached out to Ms. [Inaudible]?

Brett Gable: So we were at a bit of a crossroads on how far to reach out. You know, I don't want to make a promise to the charter school that they can start bringing kids over tomorrow with a rope and walking down there or the hills school or somebody else. So I don't think Gene's testament that he's been educating people on the history of our area and using Asbury Church for all these years and wants to continue in Gene's the teacher of the teachers. So it's already got a following. I don't see there'll be really any problem in saying how important this is. And as we become a repository for more and more complete information about this special community, I don't think we'll be beating them away with a stick, but I think it will be consistent that we can get schoolchildren to come through and get educators through and people to understand what was going on. It is a really interesting crossroad. I mean, if you look at it Asbury Church has always been, you know hit it was a Methodist Episcopal Church that then got split because of political trouble. It then was a struggling church. It was a hospital. People were dying there. It was a school that was only a school for a while. There were, I think, eight or 11 bureau church, bureau schools in the area, two, in our area one off the Plains Road and one here, one was at Boxwood learn that from Gene's book. But you know, and then it was a church and it declined, unfortunately. And and now it is where it is. But I think, you know, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, I think you guys have done such a great job stabilizing it. It's in a good place. It has the right foundation. It's not falling apart. We've crawled all over that building. Your engineering work is fantastic. I mean, nothing more needs to be done that that thing is you're rock solid. The things you did to the rafters, it's awesome.

Bridget Wilson: I feel like we're. We're so uniquely suited for this. I don't need to move. I have a great space. I have a you know, it's a perfectly viable business. We actually see it as a way forward where we can save that church and we can bring it back to its glory. And, you know, this is sort of a win win for everyone. And it's really the only I can't think of another business that works is perfectly because we really don't touch the space. The second classes are over, everything can be stored away. And then we're able to give back to the community. And of course, all three of us, four of us. Melinda, we'll stand behind it on a personal level as well.

Bridge Littleton: Okay. That was all the questions we had. So thank you guys very much. Thank you.

Brett Gable: Thank you. Thanks for the time.

Bridge Littleton: I would just say both folks tonight who presented, if you can tomorrow email Danny everything you brought or any additional information you want to provide. Pastor Michelle You had some additional letters and stuff like that. Please just make sure we have them. Danny Get them to everybody on council and yeah, again, thank you, everybody for all your hard work. We really, truly appreciate it. [multiple speakers] And with that, as I promised. Meetings adjourned.

