



Current update of the Leadership Forum activity

2 messages

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THE LEADERSHIP FORUM

“Improving Tomorrow...Today”

July 2018 update

To: Interested and engaged leaders

Dear Mickey,

The Leadership Forum is a volunteer initiative of seasonal and year-round residents of the Cashiers plateau. Organized into 10 focused initiatives, 9 of the 10 task forces have held multiple in-person meetings this past month and below is a current brief update on our activity. Periodically we hear people saying things that are not true, so we will try to clarify issues with some facts.

Area facts- We have observed many misstatements about the area and will try to state what we have learned as we communicate what we do:

- Some state that Cashiers pays 50% of the county taxes and gets nothing back. Here are the facts:
 - The 2018-2019 budget for Jackson County is \$71.5 million
 - Cashiers area property taxes are approximately \$18.6 million, 26% of the total
 - We don't know exactly how much comes back but the volume of services is substantial.

- The “round about”- consideration to improve the intersection of Rte 64 and Rte 107 is going to be studied by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT). Any recommended change will involve public hearings several years off. If construction is committed to, it will not occur until 2026. (quote by DOT)

Database- We continue to build a confidential community database and now have connection to over 3,200 residents. This represents only 25 of the 86 communities. If you are willing to help us connect to more residents, please email me. Our database is confidential and is not being shared with anyone. The only time we communicate is when people ask to be kept informed or when we are made aware of important community issues.

Leaders who have responded

So far, 190 individuals have committed to work in one of the 10 initiatives and have already engaged in our work sessions, several on more than one initiative. 37% of the volunteers are year-round residents. 267 more residents are supportive of our efforts to initiate actionable projects on the plateau.

If you know of others who would like to engage or stay informed, please forward their email address and cell phone number.

Initiatives status:

- **Education-** Dr. Joy Clark, leader. 36 participants
 - Identified several things they want to do to support and enhance education offerings on the plateau:
 - Jill Keith designed the 42 x 30 inch “flag/banner” to be used throughout the community to be auctioned off as part of a Village Green fundraiser. The banner will be hung at the Crossroads, promoting the variety of education offerings in the area.
 - Rick Robson, Ann Goldman, and Linda Zeagler are working with the Chamber to link the websites of all 5 schools. Steve Johannessen is helping with technology needs.
 - The task force began work to convince the community to sign up for Ingles’s “Tools for Schools” program. Ingles donates a percentage of all your purchases if one shows their “ADVANTAGE” card when checking out. Over the years they have donated \$15+ million. The program runs from July 29, 2018- June 1, 2019. Just click here to sign up <https://www.ingles-markets.com/toolsforschools> and please ask others to do so.

- Dianne Tuttle volunteered to write up a one-page review of the schools. It will be distributed to all realtors.
- Irv Welling is creating a generic standardized scholarship application form for applicants to use, simplifying the process.

• **Health/Wellness-** Dr. Walter Clark, leader, 54 participants (26 are physicians)

- Advised the task force on the status of the hospital acquisition by HCA. A contract still needs to be executed and then the transaction needs to be reviewed and approved by the North Carolina Attorney General.
- Continued to develop a concept plan to create a health park on Foundation property in Cashiers, 8.4 acres between 64 & 107 to be occupied by multiple specialties. Some identified are:
 - Physical Therapy clinic
 - Physician assistant school
 - Health clinic
 - Weight reduction clinic
 - Concierge care
 - Diagnostic clinic
 - Free dental clinic
 - Psychiatrist
 - Substance abuse clinic
 - Teledoc clinic
 - Indigent care clinic

If this is created it would be a terrific Cashiers asset and a support entity to help maintain the viability of the hospital.

- All discussed the repurposing of the Highlands Cashiers Hospital Foundation because, as a public profit-making company, HCA is not able to receive support from it. Here were some suggestions:
 1. The Foundation ensures that state of the art healthcare is available to the community.
 2. Provide supporting education for providers and consumers of healthcare.
 3. Advocacy
 - Three questions were posed to the group and will be discussed at the next session:

1. How valuable is it to retain a foundation corpus?
2. What specific health care needs are needed in the communities?
3. What health care services would donors in the area support?

- **Community Housing-** John Franklin, leader assisted by Linda Bengé & Turner Inscoe, 27 participants

- Their focus on housing is:
 - Teachers, nurses, full time professionals and full-time workers
 - Create options within 5 miles of Cashiers
 - Assess availability of housing inventory
 - Create a vehicle that convinces donors to invest
 - Evaluate subsidized housing and other government programs
- Financial support:
 - Grants- Brandy Letson found a WCU professor who volunteered to write grant requests for us.
 - David Bock suggested that we raise \$1 million through grants, loans, philanthropic giving, and tax credits to buy 5 homes to rent to those candidates for affordable housing as determined by guidelines yet to be decided.
- Alliances:
 - Habitat for Humanity- they have expressed an interest in working with us for rental or rehabilitation of properties. All agreed that partnering with Habitat would be good for our project and enhance our credibility. We will continue to pursue this connection.
- Type of housing:
 - Manufactured Homes- evaluating
 - Stick built- cost at least \$150 psf plus land
- Property management- Brandy and her husband are willing to manage any rental units that are part of this project.
- Issues to be resolved at the next meeting:
 - Who will own the property that is purchased?

- The grant:
 - How is the grant to be written?
 - How long will it take?
 - How long to get the funds?
- Who can do a market survey for us?
- Who will write a business plan? We need one to be able to raise money.
- Sewer options- John is studying and will report at the next meeting

• **Workforce Development-** Jim Dunn leader, 18 participants

- Job placement opportunities- We felt the Chamber's website would be our best source to house all jobs and we're asking Allen Tansil to lead this effort.
- Job skill building offerings-Blue Ridge school and Southwestern Community College do this and we plan to identify all others and then create a way for candidates interested to access them. We are asking David Jones to lead this.
- The New Century Scholars program- we want to find out how we can help them to expand the program. We are asking John Lehotsky to lead this task.
- Coordinate with the Community Housing task force (John Franklin)- Jim will pursue this to see how we can weave their efforts into our tasks.
- Local clubs-Speak with all the local clubs (CCSV, High Hampton, Wade Hampton, Chattooga, Trillium, etc.) and determine their training needs and initiatives. We are asking Brian Greig to lead this initiative.

• **Technology-** Craig Moore, leader, 13 participants

- Conducted a survey of all area residents on their current internet options and satisfaction level
 - We have results from over 400 residents and have analyzed the data. In general, we know that the community is dissatisfied with all internet and cell carriers, and they are indicating a willingness to invest in improving their internet access. The details will be provided as soon as the analysis is completed.
 - We will continue to add respondents to the survey as it gives people a voice.

- Agreed to be an education source because so many people do not understand the issues related to providing service. They think broadband is like electricity, just there and available.
- Decided to get the major providers here to listen to the results our community wants.
- Decided to create a template for broadband service in Cashiers that interested parties would buy on the following terms:
 - Only offer it to any HOA that can assess all their homeowners
 - Identify the cost to install the infrastructure “behind the gate”.
 - Create a 3-5-year assessment of all property owners. This could possibly be collateral for a loan to obtain the cash up front. We have already approached a local bank that is willing to make the loans.
 - Identify a provider who would supply broadband and do the servicing.
 - All users would be required to pay a year-round monthly fee.
 - Put together 500-1,000 owners who would subscribe
- **Community Plan-** Paul Robshaw, leader, 12 participants
 - Creating an overall plan for the future of Cashiers
 - The task force is studying options we can deploy to fund the various initiatives
 - Creation of a vision statement- Several were considered, and this is what is recommended:
 - **“Improving Tomorrow...Today”**
- **Culture and entertainment-** Ann Self, leader, 17 participants
 - Holding a meeting on August 7th
 - Working on establishing programs for 2019
- **Natural Resources-** Ann Wroblewski, leader, 33 participants

- Jackson County Planning Director Mike Poston spoke at the last meeting, explaining what his department and the county do. He also explained what the Cashiers Planning Council does. He explained all aspects of “form-based code”.
 - Mike described the Cashiers Small Area Plan which sets policy for the future development of Cashiers. The draft plan is due in the Fall and will be open for public comment. Mike indicated the County is open to public-private partnerships and that pathways and greenways will be included in the recommendations in the Cashiers Small Area Plan.
 - All want to work to preserve precious “green space” in the village core and will develop plans in the next meeting
 - We agreed to launch an initiative to create a pathway from Summit Charter School to the Village Green.
- **Crime Prevention-** Jim Sacha, leader, 13 participants
 - As volunteers, the one thing that can be done is to inform the community on actions it can take. We have decided to publish 10 actions for a theme called **"Safety is in Your Hands"**:
 - We are creating 10 things people should do
 - We will publish it to all the communities we have in our database and try to get it to all HOAs, churches, civic groups and the newspapers
- **Transportation and Infrastructure-** Jim Poche, leader, 38 participants
 - Focusing on pedestrian safety- initially building sidewalks on [Frank Allen Road](#), [Hwy 64](#), [Hwy 107](#) and back to Frank Allen
 - Identified four key focus areas:
 1. Pedestrian Travel
 2. Vehicular Travel
 3. Utility Infrastructure
 4. Downtown Center and Master Planning
 - Discussion items:

- Highway Right of Way and DOT- Gus Bell, Peter Paul, Mike Benitez, John Lehotsky and Sam Leder had extensive dialog relative to the existence or lack of DOT Rights of Way and the impact it has on community development. A meeting was held the next day and a strategy developed to cure the problem.
- Kate Martinson discussed a few issues of concern and followed up with a list of suggestions for funding sidewalks. We were told and are hopeful that meetings with DOT and the county may get some or all of the funding needed.
- David Jones informed the members that he and Jim Naughton had discussions relative to the landscape upgrade of existing community businesses, in particular Ingles shopping center.
- Also discussed was an idea to create some landscaping amenities at the four entrances into Cashiers. Jim Naughton became our unofficial ambassador to try to convince the Garden Club to landscape and maintain the 64/107 intersection.
- Mike Benitez agreed to get with several of the task force members and approach the County Commissioners individually or in pairs to solicit funding and support for the endeavors of the Task Force and Leadership Forum objectives.

Sincerely,

Paul

Paul Robshaw

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