

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TOWN HALL MEETINGS PLANNED TO OBTAIN IDEAS FOR STAFFORD'S 350TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Stafford, VA - From George Washington to Wayne Newton, Government Island to the new Tech and Research Center, the Trail to Freedom to the Belmont-Ferry Farm Trail, Stafford County has much to celebrate. In 2014, the County will commemorate its 350th Anniversary and salute our past, present and future. Planning for the big celebration is being led by the 350th Blue Ribbon Planning Committee which was appointed by the Board of Supervisors in 2011. The Blue Ribbon Group is inviting all citizens to a special "Town Hall Listening Session" on Wednesday, May 9 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, May 12 at 10:00 a.m. to solicit their input on how the community can best celebrate this very special anniversary.

"Stafford County has so much of which to be proud, from the past, present and the future, and we need to hear from our citizens their ideas on how we can best capture our unique history, the exciting things that are happening now, as well as what we have to look forward to," said Susan Stimpson, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

Supervisor Gary Snellings, who was born and raised in Stafford and who is on the Blue Ribbon Planning Committee, agrees. "We are so excited about Stafford's 350th anniversary, and we need to make sure we honor our past, but also recognize what we have here today," he said. "We strongly encourage everyone in the community to come to one of these town hall meetings and share their ideas, their experiences, and resources so that we can make this a celebration that will be remembered for years to come."

Because Stafford County has played such a major role in shaping America's future, the committee believes that Stafford's story is America's story. Stafford's people, such as George Washington, who spent his formative childhood years at Ferry Farm in southern Stafford, to its places, such as Government Island, where stone was quarried to build the White House and the U.S. Capitol, have all made a mark in America's history. A look into Stafford's past reveals many such people and places that contributed to the concepts of liberty, religious tolerance, free enterprise, freedom, art, racial equality and social justice.

"Every time you read Stafford's story, you learn more about our nation's story," said Harry Crisp, who is the chairman of the Blue Ribbon Planning Committee. "We need to educate our citizens and others across the United States about these links to national history, and celebrate everything that continues to make us unique – our passion, our pride, and our perseverance in the face of adversity."

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The Blue Ribbon Committee has met several times over the last few months to organize and structure under which a great county-wide celebration can be planned. Its membership is diverse and represents a wide range of groups and interests. In addition to Mr. Crisp, other members are Michael Neuhard, president of the North Stafford Community Improvement League, who serves as the committee's vice-chairman; Cessie Howell, a South Stafford resident and a George Washington Foundation Regent; Stafford natives, Sheriff Charles Jett and Commonwealth's Attorney Dan Chichester (retired); Cathy Yablonski, senior vice president and administrator of the Stafford Hospital; James Schwartz, D.D.S dentist and businessman; David Kerr, a Stafford resident and former Stafford School Board member; Michael Lovitt, Chick Fil-A owner and president of the Stafford branch of the NAACP (2008-2010); Robert Gibbons, member of the Planning Commission and Rockhill Supervisor from 1992 to 2008; and Gary Snellings, Stafford Native and member of the Board of Supervisors from the Hartwood District. The committee is supported by county government staff including County Administrator Anthony Romanello, Deputy County Administrator Tim Baroody, Tourism Manager M.C. Moncure, and Public Information Administrator Cathy Vollbrecht.

Both Town Hall meetings will take place in the Board Chambers of the George L. Gordon, Jr., Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford, VA 22554. All of Stafford County, including individual citizens, civic organizations, school students, churches, businesses, etc., is invited to attend to offer their ideas for the celebration.

The Blue Ribbon Committee will also be looking for volunteers to assist on its various subcommittees, including Finance and Fundraising; Public Relations, Marketing, Outreach and Human Resources; Education and Legacy; and Events, Programs, and Logistics.

The vision of the committee for the anniversary is to create a year-long celebration in 2014. The committee's hope is that this celebration will set forth a legacy for future generations so that the people, places and events that are celebrated in 2014 continue to be memorialized regularly in some way in the future.

For more information about the Town Hall meetings, please contact the Stafford Public Information Office at (540) 658-4894 or the Stafford Tourism Office at (540) 658-8681.

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