



**Town of Chapel Hill
Special Committee to Consider the Renaming of Airport Road**

NOTES

Day 1 – November 5, 2004

Hopes for the Day/Process

We began the day by inviting Committee members to introduce themselves and share their hopes for the day and process:

- Talk to each other, hear each other's concerns.
- Regardless of decision, all heard and understood and feel that their input had an impact.
- Hope to bring my perspective as a historian, draws upon deeper legacy.
- Get to know each other and what others think.
- Engage in open, honest discussion and consensus.
- Open covenant openly arrived at.
- Fond of folks on both sides of the issue, continued community.
- Get to know each other, speak freely, know there is answer from someone greater, hope we find it.
- Listen in civil tones and truly hear, get to know each other better, agreeable solution we can all live with.
- Sort out sense of fairness among group, open mind, do job to best of our ability, have sense of fairness and fair play.
- Embarrassment to drive past MLK cul-de-sac, need honesty, not totally honest communication, can still smile at each other at end of process.
- Want constructive dialogue to heal wounds opened during past months, tied to past history.
- Assist as facilitator.
- Bring set of values to discussion, see my set of experiences, understand values, interests of others with opposing views.
- We think this process is worthwhile at the end.
- Understand each other, smile at end, be a community.
- Committee sets tone for Chapel Hill and having difficult conversations.
- Everyone speaks their heart, lack of judgment, and forgiveness.
- The art of conversation returns.
- Realize issue is bigger than our individual positions, part of larger process.
- We have different process for handling issues of race beyond the norm.
- Shared conversations, collective decision making.

Exploring the Issues

Through small group "cafés," Committee members explored (1) reasons for renaming, (2) reasons for not renaming, (3) alternative options, and (4) common interests. Facilitators encouraged participants to share all reasons – including ones they had heard but don't personally hold. Thus, several listed below do not reflect the beliefs of Committee members. All responses are listed below, including ones repeated in different small groups.

<p>Reasons for Renaming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good street because not many individual homes. Apartments and businesses are easier. ▪ It's a major road – has significance. ▪ Dr. King as artery, UNC is heart of town. Airport Road is artery leading to heart of town. Honor to name this road after Dr. King due to diversity of UNC and significance. Beauty of symbolism. ▪ Important given difficult racial history in Chapel Hill, to give this small gesture towards healing wounds of desegregation. ▪ Already have roads “dedicated” to major figures and no one knows it despite signs. ▪ There is no national monument. Roads have become the monument. Every town standing up has become the monument. ▪ One of two African Americans to win Nobel Peace Prize. He is an eloquent and spiritual icon. ▪ Could name MLK Blvd. all the way to HB. Connects parts of county, extends it to various parts of town. It's a piece of road that's bigger than Chapel Hill. ▪ Most of the town employees in public works are people of color, many living outside of Chapel Hill. Driving down MLK Blvd. to work and doing their work there may have significance to them personally. ▪ Nothing of significance has been done to honor any African American in Chapel Hill. ▪ Chapel Hill is perceived as progressive and aggressive on issues of race, but reality is far from that. ▪ Many roads in US named for MLK (over 700), but not usually main roads. ▪ Naming roads for MLK has become a national symbol. ▪ MLK was crucially important to Civil Rights. International, national, and local hero. Totem of Civil Rights. ▪ Way to solidify MLK's memory and what he stood for in nation and Chapel Hill. ▪ Emphasize commitment of this community to values King stood for. ▪ Civil Rights and things MLK fought for are under attack nationally and locally. ▪ Insult of MLK cul-de-sac. ▪ African Americans asked for this. Large portion of African Americans leadership in town. ▪ African Americans have already paid the price. ▪ Politicians promised it and were elected to do it. ▪ MLK's movement took place on the streets. ▪ Important to establish stance on issues – race, inequities, etc. Would be a strong statement. ▪ Privilege, acknowledge, promote the history of African Americans. ▪ Acknowledge the impact Dr. King has had on local/national community for all people (white as well as African Americans). ▪ Current designations for black people are in the black community. Don't have an acknowledgement outside the community. ▪ We are in the second/third phase of the Civil Rights struggle. Renaming is public acknowledgement of that. ▪ That road is important past, present, future. People will travel on it – lead to discussions. This country needs to talk. ▪ Airport Road is the thoroughfare – in your face. Know Dr. King, what he stands for. ▪ Current road is “slap in the face.” Out of sight, out of mind. ▪ Airport Road is staple, artery of this community. Different than 15-501 – no one has real ownership of that. People do connect with Airport Road. Symbolic significance. Everything is on it. Leads to county seat. Connecting road – all aspects of the community. ▪ Small inconvenience – people have to actively make the change. ▪ Dr. King is one of the most important people in our country's history. ▪ Renaming Airport Road has become a litmus test to show that we are willing to address hurtful history in Chapel Hill. ▪ One of the many things to keep King's legacy alive. Particularly for people who were not alive then. ▪ Opportunity to correct something questionable (the 1st MLK Street in Chapel Hill). ▪ To honor Dr. King. ▪ Point of pride for the African American community.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Because Airport Road is a major road in Chapel Hill. Makes a big statement to rename a central street. ▪ Chapel Hill renaming a major road – atypical from other parts of the US. ▪ Highly traveled road by children on school buses.
Reasons for Not Renaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feels like giving up some part of white history in favor of black history. ▪ Feels like losing part of personal history of Airport Road for older residents. ▪ Not interested in honoring MLK because we don't agree with his legitimacy. Not important enough to honor. ▪ Local history outbalances Dr. King's legacy. ▪ Makes sense to have Airport Road named for the airport. ▪ NAACP will whine about not getting the road renamed. Process has been corrupt. NAACP is a special interest group. ▪ 700 people signed petition against it. ▪ Too much cost and inconvenience. ▪ So many communities rename and it becomes a token thing for people in Chapel Hill rather than addressing racial justice more deeply. ▪ Dr. King is token symbol for racial justice in US. Aren't there others to honor? Marian Anderson? Harold Foster? Frank Porter Graham? Might inspire greater knowledge of local history. ▪ MLK was a communist. ▪ Sense of place – it's my home. ▪ Financial costs. ▪ Opposition to change. ▪ Airport Road is remembering one history already. ▪ If one history is replaced, another is displaced. ▪ Other renamings could/should be done. ▪ MLK is black. Some people oppose honoring a black man on a major road. ▪ Some don't understand impact of MLK and Civil Rights on their lives. ▪ MLK was a communist sympathizer. ▪ MLK was a womanizer. ▪ MLK was against the Vietnam War. ▪ Is MLK worthy of honoring? ▪ MLK already a street name. ▪ Inconvenience – stationery, business cards, have to notify friends outside of Chapel Hill. ▪ Losing big part of Chapel Hill history – Navy pre-flight training, Gerald Ford and 18,000+ trained there. History from WW2 that we shouldn't throw out the door, be forgotten. ▪ Too costly for businesses on Airport Road. ▪ Should honor someone who's more local to Chapel Hill or even NC. Lots of distinguished people. ▪ Chapel Hill capable of more substantive way of honoring Dr. King. Can keep name, legacy alive in other ways that are more present in people's lives. We can do better, more. ▪ Tough year for business. Incur more costs. Can't bear more costs. ▪ Should not make a final decision until it becomes agenda item at Town Council meeting. ▪ Honor in more unique way than a street. Better way to honor someone of this caliber. ▪ Think that would bring crime to the area. ▪ "These people" want to rename "our" street. Don't let the NAACP make our decisions. ▪ History of Airport Road is very important. ▪ Expense to merchants/businesses on Airport Road. ▪ Emotional impact of change is hard. Disrupts people's sense of place. Attachment to roots or historical places. ▪ Lose recognition of the name over time. ▪ Confusing for delivery/mail (change addresses). ▪ Does not give justice to MLK's legacy. ▪ Dr. King did not have a direct impact in Chapel Hill.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Backlash nationally on him as an individual. ▪ If renamed, rather rename for a local Chapel Hillian. ▪ Most people on Airport Road don't want it changed. ▪ Racism.
Alternative Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Name new wing of library after MLK (or whole library or Library Drive or park there). New wing contain special MLK collection on peace, nonviolence, and movements for racial and economic justice. ▪ Rename Airport Road "MLK Airport Road." ▪ Rename a large park. ▪ Rename Franklin Street. ▪ Follow NYC example of name existing road commemorating MLK, but addresses remain the same (dedicating with commemorative signs). ▪ Have options beyond renaming to have more substantial dialogue, conversation, learning, and honoring. ▪ Rename Weaver Dairy Road extension (unlikely because not major thoroughfare). ▪ Dedicate road, not name change, from I-40 to southern city limits. ▪ Library wing/MLK Library Drive. ▪ Rename library for MLK. Direction signs from I-40 to Library. ▪ Name new high school for MLK. ▪ Name community park next to Southern Village for MLK. ▪ Name Airport Road for another Civil Rights figure. ▪ Name another road (Chapel Hill North?). ▪ Take children to learn about MLK. ▪ Rename "MLK Airport Road." ▪ Name new downtown park for MLK. ▪ Rename old post office downtown. ▪ Explore ways to mitigate harm that people who live on Airport Road feel they have. Time it, phase in over time to allow stationery, etc. to run out. Town money to offset costs. ▪ Name library for Dr. King, also collection, wing. Could include Library Drive renaming. ▪ Name transit for Dr. King. ▪ Commission history of Airport Road that incorporates black and white experiences. ▪ Name airport "MLK Airport," then road becomes "MLK Airport Road." ▪ Promote MLK/Airport Road as a vibrant place. ▪ Dedicate the road. Keep "Airport Road" officially. Include markers about MLK. ▪ Change name of UNC to MLK. ▪ Name parking lot 5 after MLK. ▪ Create historical path that cuts across Chapel Hill with markers along the way. Civil Rights walking tour of Chapel Hill. ▪ Rename Raleigh Road/Hwy 54. ▪ Library, school instead of Airport Road renamed for MLK. ▪ Building at UNC. ▪ Other street (Rosemary). ▪ Parks – name or rename. ▪ Airport Road should be renamed for Michael Jordan or Ronald Reagan. ▪ Continued racial dialogue. ▪ Educate the community about MLK. ▪ BSM wants dialogue with business owners in Chapel Hill. ▪ Rename Airport Road in honor of a Civil Rights leader from Chapel Hill (Julius Chambers, Howard Lee, Bayard Rustin). ▪ Re-narrating Chapel Hill's history.
Common Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desire for bringing about racial harmony through this divisive issue in an area where the racial divide has been invisible. ▪ Justice and fairness.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appears that there is a desire to honor Dr. King, but no one is agreement as to how. ▪ Make racial image of Chapel Hill more real. ▪ Racial issue not easy in Chapel Hill. Clarity around mixed emotions re: NAACP’s credibility, contribution to process. ▪ MLK is unifying force for people of color. Symbolism, monument. ▪ Symbolism – movement, transportation, and roads are significant. ▪ Acknowledgement of African Americans in Chapel Hill and their contributions. ▪ Honoring Dr. King. ▪ Love for Chapel Hill. ▪ Unity – ultimately higher level. ▪ Open relationships, mutual respect. ▪ Pluralism (equal rights and justice). ▪ Diverse community where everyone feels ownership and a sense of place. ▪ Coming to a decision we all respect. ▪ Community where everyone understands importance of racial pride. ▪ Honor MLK permanently. ▪ Capture history, stories of all individuals and collective, specific to Airport Road and Chapel Hill. ▪ Mitigate costs (real and perceived) to residents and businesses on Airport Road. ▪ Build trust across Chapel Hill. ▪ Everyone who lives in Chapel Hill wants their history represented and respected. ▪ Acknowledging and honoring our Civil Rights history (i.e., honoring Dr. King). ▪ Common interest in the democratic process. ▪ All want to be heard. ▪ All have an interest in living together and getting along. ▪ Minimizing discomfort and maximizing collegiality. ▪ Minimal administrative burden (address change cost).
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Large Group Discussion

We invited Committee members to share their feelings about the Café discussions and Kiva conversation:

- Lots of information
- Helpful process – voices heard
- Opportunity for dialogue – agree or disagree
- Democratic process
- Raised issue of race, began discussion
- Most don’t like to be labeled, maybe my actions are based on interests, heritage
- Chapel Hill is not as perceived – acknowledging can help heal
- Hard to see some things written – embarrassing, painful, good to face reality, could be insulting to black people
- Black people exposed to that all our lives
- White people have said those things in safe space – between white people – what was written may not be views in this room
- It still exists out there – appreciate honest response
- Even though aware of it, it’s never easy, haven’t accepted it
- Listed some reasons for opposing because they may be root interests, feelings – promote deeper discussion
- Need to tell stories on micro and macro levels – ignorant to say MLK had no direct impact on Chapel Hill, if you don’t know history you will repeat mistakes of the past

- Sincere desire to reason together
- Could be in agreement, but for different reasons
- In Chapel Hill, not enough dialogue across difference – people are often more alike than different
- We disagreed on how to get someplace that agreed upon
- We could discuss with civility

Day 2 – November 6, 2004

On the second day, the Committee focused on developing recommendations. The options discussed are included in the main body of the Final Report.

Communication to Community

We closed our session by asking Committee members what messages they wanted the public to hear:

- All members of community were engaged even though there was not complete agreement. No grudges.
- Observers were involved and engaged.
- Impressed by way process was able to draw out deeply held beliefs and extent to how process allowed each other to talk to each other. Process was valuable.
- We are not going to hide from race anymore. That is powerful.
- Telling truth is okay. Assumed it might damage, but actually heals.
- Touched by stories. Incredible gift to share stories of ignorance from white people. Now that it's difficult for whites to understand perspective and we appreciate your sharing. My stereotypes about young white men have changed.
- Commend Town Council members who have been engaged.
- Reaffirm we need to keep this conversation alive – Council and everyone.
- Thank Edith, though she has faced negative comments.
- Consensus process useful and I appreciate it as a tool.
- Applaud OpenSource.
- Really proud of Chapel Hill. Not proud of race in Chapel Hill. Seems so embedded. Committee provided great opportunity.
- Thank Jesse and Mayor for proposing this.
- Great benefit with this process and great courage from Mayor to move forward.

Day 3 – November 20, 2004

Moving from a Negative Peace to a Positive Peace

Evoking Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words from his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," we split the Committee into four small groups to explore ways that Chapel Hill could move from a negative peace, which is the absence of tension, to a positive peace, which is the presence of justice. Each group considered the question, "What can you do – individually and collectively – to invite the presence of justice in Chapel Hill and create a positive peace?" They then reconvened as a large group to share their ideas:

- Dialogue brings up things people didn't realize.
- Don't talk about race beyond race lines. Must acknowledge problem. Ongoing dialogue in institutional way (schools, set by Town Council).
- Need balance of people who disagree to dialogue as first step. Must propose real concrete change to start dialogue – has impact.
- Life-long resident of Chapel Hill and student who said initially no problem with race in Chapel Hill later said he noticed more after discuss with Tom and attending homelessness conference.
- Sally as emcee made link between homelessness and issue with MLK. Read *Call to Conscience*, had impact on her understanding.
- The issue as latest frontier, addressing institutionalized racism. Thought all cool because of changes, but realize issues there. Starting to get at it with this process.
- Laws being changed by Rehnquist Supreme Court. Resegregation of schools in the South. Economic disparity, but can't address through current laws. Progress of 50s, 60s, and 70s being reversed. People need to know.
- If brings discussion in Chapel Hill, worth it. Awakened consciousness in people. Change perception that all is okay because no conflict. Because of apathy, people haven't rocked the boat. Has to get at heart of economic system to have impact.
- Airport Road dispute didn't create tension – uncovered it.
- Black community tends to lay low on speaking about issues – apologetic in recognition of Dr. King, giving reasons though reasons are obvious. Others don't know why this is important to older people in community.
- Must educate community – open doors and have dialogue, sit down and talk amongst ourselves. Hope we won't be sheltered from each other.
- Agree with that, just not renaming.
- This dialogue needs facilitation, under controlled situations, to be institutionalized.
- Difference between dialogue and conversation. Have to be steered in a direction.
- Conversation dies unless forum is created. Otherwise win-loss over win-win.
- Individual groups will meet, but won't talk to each other unless issues arises.
- Misinformation in community – e.g., "6 people from Durham" but really only one and I have worked in Chapel Hill for many years. Role for media to assist. Forums help media give a more balanced view.
- Promotion of Chapel Hill as "Southern Part of Heaven" is problematic. No consensus on racial problem in Chapel Hill, so won't move to first base. New folks who move say they can see the problem immediately.
- Recommendation for group to keep this going. Council can put money to it – shows commitment. Move beyond process. Should show up in budget. Elected officials have challenge to decide if this is priority.

Process Evaluation

We closed the session with an evaluation of the Committee’s process since its formation. We invited Committee members to share things they felt good about and things they wished were different. We focused their feedback into three process areas – content, format, and relationships:

	Plus (Positives)	Delta (Changes)
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sally’s information on road renaming was helpful. ▪ Tom’s input on history – needs to be told. ▪ Did research history of Airport Road. ▪ There was a place for all voices, covered all things well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need more content on effects of oppression and modern racism. ▪ Include institutional power. ▪ Give homework about racial issues. ▪ More on road renamings and context of honoring MLK across the country. ▪ Specific charge of committee prevented us from getting even deeper into other issues.
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up in a way that allowed us to get at content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kiva divided by race didn’t capture people’s stance on renaming. ▪ Future conversations about race need more people who disagree – adds depth.
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good will can be generated by leaving with good will towards all on Committee. Build on growth from process. ▪ Respect. ▪ Committee abided by ground rules. ▪ No matter what positions, all people cared in some way. ▪ Did demonstrate that we can communicate respectfully and find things to agree upon. ▪ We have more experience with interracial discourse than most in Chapel Hill. Committee can engage others. ▪ We can communicate our own experience and perspectives. ▪ We can speak at Town Council on December 6. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision to rename might have missed opportunity for building trust with community members who oppose. ▪ Need to mend relationships that were damaged by perceptions about Committee make-up. ▪ Unsure if Committee has positive peace. Hoped Committee would have shown more unity. Chapel Hill is not embracing decision. ▪ Have not addressed community’s concerns.