

County and Town recognize Civil War 150th anniversary

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The Ashland Town Council and Hanover Board of Supervisors separately passed resolutions supporting the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission.

The County's resolution establishes a subcommittee of the Hanover Historical Commission. The committee is charged with raising awareness of the multi-year commemoration and increasing tourism in Hanover County, and it is qualified to receive State support.

Comprising the committee is representation from the Hanover Tavern Foundation, Hanover County Historical Society, the Town of Ashland, the Ashland Museum, the Historic Polegreen Church Foundation, the National Park Service, and other organizations that express an interest in participating.

At the Sept. 7 Town Council meeting, Ashland Museum board member Rosanne Shalf addressed Council on the issue.

"There will be a four-year commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War," she said. "Planning's been going on for quite some time, and the Virginia Sesquicentennial Commission asked that localities establish committees of their own to promote the commemoration. Hanover County's committee has been formed."

She said that she and Assistant Town Manager Josh Farrar are representing Ashland on the committee.

Town Council voted 5-0 to adopt a resolution in support of the sesquicentennial celebration.

Town Manager Charles Hartgrove mentioned that in the near future, Farrar would provide Council with a formal report on the committee's activities.

Sept. 8, Deputy County Administrator John Hodges and Hanover Tavern Executive Director David Deal brought a similar resolution before the Board of Supervisors.

Hodges explained that the State has established a commission to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War and Emancipation, and this commission has encouraged localities to establish local committees that would be eligible for grant programs.

He said that County staff's recommendation was to make the committee a subcommittee of the County's Historical Commission.

“The budget that the Board has adopted recognizes the Historical Commission and provides resources in support of recognizing historical events like this, and we also have staff support from the Planning Department that is available to assist this committee in their task should the Board elect to adopt a resolution,” Hodges said.

Deal said that the State commission was established in 2006 and created four goals for the commemoration: diversity, inclusiveness, education and statewide accessibility.

“The commemoration will be inclusive of and meaningful to all Virginians, particularly diverse racial and ethnic groups, immigrants and citizens who do not have a hereditary link to the American Civil War, and young people who do not understand the relevance of the American Civil War to today’s population,” Deal said of the diversity goal.

Regarding the goal of inclusiveness, he said, “The commemoration will seek to portray a fair and balanced story of Virginia’s participation in the American Civil War that includes African-American, Union and Confederate perspectives.”

He continued with education. “The commemoration period will have a strong education component, which will be intended to ignite a renewed interest in Virginia’s historical heritage.”

For the final goal, Deal said, “The commemoration will be statewide, involving all localities and encompassing all Civil War-related institutions, museums, battlefields, parks and facilities within the Commonwealth.”

The Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 to adopt the resolution. Supervisors Elton Wade of the Cold Harbor District and Chuck McGhee of the Henry District were absent.

The County’s resolution includes a list of activities for the committee to consider undertaking.

Among those suggestions are: “Hanover County Troop Monument and Wisconsin Troop Monument rededications;” “Seek to include programming on the Underground Railroad and Gabriel’s Rebellion (1800—pre Civil War);” “Arrange for the use of online services such as online interactive Civil War map noting all historic markers, sites, skirmishes, battles, Underground railroad, located and shown with GPS coordinates;” “Create a marketing tool for specifically promoting the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War and Emancipation in the County;” “Sponsor Bus Trips to Upcoming VA Sesquicentennial Conferences” and more.