
Clemson students deliver at Camp Hope meeting

By Kyle Perrotti | Dec 09, 2016

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Photo by: Kyle Perrotti

Former Camp Hope Commission Chairman Richard Hurley and Clemson student Caroline Donaldson discuss some of the new plans for the property.

CANTON — It's been a long process, but students from Clemson University finally presented their ideas for Camp Hope's future Dec. 6 at Canton's municipal building. And the students did not disappoint.

The meeting kicked off with former Camp Hope Commission Chairman Richard Hurley introducing the professors who headed up the project, Paul Russell and Dustin Albright.

Russell spoke, praising both the students and the community, before introducing student Caitlyn Kistler, who explained what a master plan is

and how the groups were instructed to draw up their designs.

The plans were broken into three key focuses: where Camp Hope is; where it wants to go; and how it can get there. Initially, the plan was to present the ideas the groups came up with. From there, they wanted to gain public feedback, and eventually, after adding ideas suggested by residents, public acceptance.



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Both presentations were brief, yet loaded with unique ideas. Although there were many similarities between

the two — both focused largely on history, education and the uniqueness of this part of Appalachia — the styles differed greatly.

The first presentation used the metaphor of a barn quilt to describe Camp Hope, highlighting how each piece is distinct, yet they all come together to form a greater whole, and the group used more verbal descriptions to relate ideas. The second was less abstract

and broke things down into three overlapping categories: simplify, preserve and expand. While the first group used verbal descriptions to relate ideas, the second graphically represented almost every part of its plan

One major similarity between each of the presentations was a focus on the communal. The first group highlighted the opportunity to build campsites in groups of four, allowing large groups to share the space. The second group similarly recommended building five-person family cabins in groups of three. Additionally, both had a key focus on making the camp enjoyable for everyone by improving accessibility.

Although group one didn't focus as much on branding, group two developed a new logo for the camp which was well-received and even showed how the logo could be use on signs, apparel and merchandise.

At the end of the second presentation, just prior to the students spreading out to speak with residents, Hurley stood up and commended the group.

"I thought you'd come back with one or two ideas, not a whole book full. This is truly great," he said before being followed by a resounding applause.

Maryetta Edwards, a direct descendant of the Burrusses — the family that originally owned the camp — had nothing but praise for the students.

"I grew up there and I remember kids from the camp taking nature walks through my backyard," she said. "And the way they took into account how it currently looks along with all the history there was great."

Pam Kearse, who was also a member of the Camp Hope Commission and considers the camp to be her backyard, was equally pleased. She noted that personal touches, such as one group's recommendation to name a potential river overlook "Hope's Landing" showed that they put genuine thought into the project.

"It's almost like they've lived here as long as we have," she said. "They really bought into it."

Stanley Metcalf of Canton said he came in with nothing but negative opinions regarding efforts to make significant changes to the property, but he admitted that by the end of the meeting, he was starting to come around.

"I definitely like some of what they were saying," he said, "Not all of it, but a lot."

Hurley said that along with the students doing a great job, he wanted to take the time to commend the town officials who made this happen.

"Seth Hendler-Voss (town manager) has had the vision to do this, and that speaks well for the town government and him as town manager," he said. "And I would equally praise the mayor and aldermen for being in locked-step in supporting those ideas."

Russell, who has been leading projects like this for five years, said he was happy to see residents be so receptive to his students' ideas. He was especially happy to see their enthusiasm regarding the approach to preserving history and culture. He said he believes programs like this are mutually beneficial for both the community and the students.

“It enables the community to learn how to engage with a private firm to make this a realized project, and the students learn how to work with the town and communicate design ideas to the public,” he said.

He added that next semester will be spent incorporating public feedback and synthesizing the two presentations into one master plan which will be delivered to the town sometime near the end of the spring semester.

He also highlighted the fact that what they are presenting are simply ideas of how the town can move forward to improve the property, what Canton does with them is solely up to the town.

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