

Portal Partnership Meeting
November 19, 2007
Minutes

Attending: Larry Motes, Abraham Williams, Emory Hagins, Dr. Frank Saunders, Stephanie Kenny, and Dianne Bath

What has been happening?

Community of Portal – Emory Hagins and Abraham reported that Pine Grove Holy Church has built an education facility on to the church. In this facility they worked with Paul Hudson at the elementary school to serve children that were not being served through the Boys and Girls Club. They are not serving about 40 children and housing a GED program.

City of Portal – Larry Motes reported that he has almost 1.6 million set aside for the sewer system. The hold up has been getting the engineers to complete the drawings. He has been able to secure sites for treatment plant and spray fields from community members. The zoning ordinances were passed at the November election. Dr. Saunders reported on the Centennial Park at the west end of town. The land was secured from the school board and the design is three concentric circles with a memorial to all war veterans, a flag circle, and a sculptor. The design was done with assistance from Georgia Southern's landscaping architect. The DOT is assisting with the side walks and the labor is being provided through correctional institute in Reidsville. Granite benches have been donated by community members and graduates of Portal High. There is also going to be Folk Life Drama written by Dr. Saunders. The auditions have occurred and it will be presented in late February and early March.

School Level – Larry reported that land had been purchased adjoining the high school for the new high school. He understanding is that there is about 13+ million for the project. The site engineers had been at the school in the past several weeks in order to draw up plans. Paul Hudson has been working with Emory to support the after school programming. Dr. Saunders had been to the high school to get support for the play and was somewhat disappointed that there were not more students at the auditioning.

GSU – Dianne gave a brief history of the partnership and shared the desire to continue the meetings on some level out of the Georgia Center for Education Renewal.

Challenges - The group was unanimous in identifying the needs of seniors as the greatest concern and the community center facility as necessary to provide a meeting space for the seniors and after school programming. The location of the center across from the elementary school seems to be the best location. The school board owns the property. A temporary solution could be the National Registry facilities. Emory suggested some church facilities. All agreed this would only be

temporary. There was concern about the high school not offering literary and fine art opportunities for students as well as academic rigor.

Barriers – The county government entities such as commission and school boards not taking the community seriously; getting projects through the bureaucracies for approval; and community awareness.

Enablers – Community is beginning to come alive as Dr. Saunders shared. Community is willing to get behind ideas as seen through the Centennial Park and Folk Life Drama.

Resolutions – The group could approach the school board member, David Ball, and the superintendent about a desire to form some partnership to utilize the land across from the elementary school for a community center. Larry Motes volunteered to initiate some conversation with them again. Ms. Bath suggested that they might want to talk with the Statesboro Bulloch County Parks and Recreation about doing the same thing that had been done in Stilson and Portal by providing some sort of recreation facility. The Portal High concerns could be discussed with the community and business representatives on the school council.

How can we support each other? The partnership group felt they really needed to continue to meet on a regular basis and to expand their membership. They also felt they needed to begin some sort of five year plan for the community.

Next meeting will be early February and the focus will be to begin some sort of five year planning process. Ms. Bath will set up the meeting with Larry and notify everyone of the date.