



Memorandum:

To: Religious Freedom Byway Advisory Committee

From: Jim Klein, Lardner/Klein

Date: 3 July 2007

Subject: Advisory Committee Meeting #1 Meeting Summary

The first advisory committee meeting for the Religious Freedom Byway Management Plan was held from 1-3 pm on June 26th, 2007 at the offices of the Southern Maryland Realtors Association in Hughesville.

Meeting Summary:

1. Terry Maxwell, State Scenic Byway Coordinator, distributed copies of the new statewide byway guidebook and map. Mr. Maxwell indicated that the Religious Freedom Tour is one of nineteen state designated byways. Funding for the byway management plan is from FHWA's scenic byway program.
2. Marci Ross, Assistant Director of Product Development for the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, noted that the Maryland Office of Tourism Development has provided some of the match and is very interested in helping Charles and St. Mary's County in their efforts to seek additional designation for the byway and to help promote the byway at the state and potentially nation-wide level.
3. Jim Klein presented an overview of the byway planning process indicating that the purpose of the planning effort was to determine whether or not the communities along the byway wanted to pursue designation as one of 126 designated routes across 44 states. Mr. Klein provided examples of the types of projects and activities that are typically done along byways including Maryland's Historic National Road.
4. In order to facilitate the development of a vision and goals for the byway, participants wrote down the following on color-coded cards:
 - green card – three most important assets along the byway
 - yellow card – problems that have to be overcome
 - blue card – a vision for the byway
 - pink card – one project to make the byway a successA transcription of the cards are attached.
5. The following questions and comments were noted as part of the discussion:
 - How long is the process? [Expect to be substantially completed by April 2008 to submit application for nomination to National Scenic Byway Program]
 - The costs and struggles of African American congregations are an important part of the story that should not be taken for granted.
 - The original law has a lot of complicated issues and themes - how should this be woven into the story?
 - Amish Mennonite community is an important part of the story
 - Tension and Conflict is a good [theme], it generates drama and interest and is something for the community to get involved with [the discussions and communicating that part of the story]
 - Non-Christian themes are important, struggles

- Brochure of Historic Churches in Charles does not mention any African American Churches. The story/history of many of the African-American churches is hard to find, (e.g. St. Peters used to be predominantly African American; story of St. Peter Claver, Patron Saint of Slaves)
 - [The word] “struggle” captures a lot of themes
 - Institution of Slavery – former plantations [is opportunity] to discuss “freedom” aspects of theme (e.g. tolerance was limited and [we should be asking “are we there yet”])
 - Relationships among denominations is interesting /unusual; for example some still require “signing a paper”
 - Religious Freedom Tour – current visitation. Are there any facts about how many visitors coming to the area are “pilgrims” who may want to see the first/early Basilicas? How many of the churches have “open doors”
 - Tourism issue of access to the sites and cemeteries. How can you find them and know which are open? [Saint Mary’s Historic Preservation Commission is working on a data base, Janet Tice is the contact]
 - Funding – sometimes only 1 or 2 people are working to gather the story [in their spare time]. Are there opportunities to get funding for more research? [Faith based travel research could be identified as an early action in the plan]
 - Tag line – [be thinking of how to modify the “Religious Freedom Tour” with a tag line for use in marketing the byway to capture all of the assets such as eco-tourism, etc.]
 - Genealogy/family research is an important audience and it often begins in Saint Mary’s, especially among retirees
6. The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will be Tuesday, August 28th from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM now confirmed at the So. Md. Realtors' room (same location).
7. A public meeting will be conducted on July 31, from 6-8pm at the Charlotte Hall Library. Advisory Committee members will be receiving a packet of information to help publicize the meeting.

