

Fairmont Youth Forum
Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center
Tuesday, January 12, 2010
7:00 p.m.

The first Fairmont Youth Forum was held on Tuesday, January 12, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. at the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center. Mayor Charles Kemp was the facilitator of the meeting and Town Clerk Jenny Larson took minutes. The panel consisted of Commissioner Perry Ashley, Sgt. Sammy Shropshire, Crystal Collins, Sean Locklear and Maurice Townsend. There were approximately 125 citizens in the audience, with 40 of those being youth.

Mayor Kemp welcomed everyone to the forum. He introduced the panelists and explained the purpose of the forum was to gather input and suggestions and establish short and long term goals for improving the lives of Fairmont youth.

Panel Discussion

Sgt. Sammy Shropshire, Fairmont Middle School Teacher/Coach

Sgt. Sammy Shropshire explained that youth spell love “time.” He has spent seven years with Project Hope building self-esteem, self discipline and motivation. Kids want someone to spend time with them and listen. Sgt. Shropshire said a main concern is the youth who go home after school with no one at home. These kids are seeking things to do. Some suggestions are a bowling alley, skating rink, gym access, and an after school center with a tutoring program.

Crystal Collins, Lumbee Bank Branch Manager

Mrs. Crystal Collins is the mother of two young children. They participate in Fairmont’s Dixie Youth Baseball program but they have to go to Lumberton for other sports and activities. She would like to see more activities for children offered here in Fairmont.

Maurice Townsend, Fairmont High School Senior

Mr. Maurice Townsend appreciated the opportunity to voice the concerns of the youth. Most of his friends say that Fairmont is too boring, with nothing to do that is interesting. Some suggestions they mentioned to him include creating a youth group that focuses on community service like visiting rest homes and donating to special causes. For recreation, they would like educational trips, town dances and more sporting events like using Rosenwald’s gym for basketball. Mr. Townsend also spoke of mentoring sessions, college fairs and career days, where local businesses could come talk to teens about internships and advice on getting a job. Mr. Townsend also said that it would be good to start a program similar to the YO! program where teens can go after school and get assistance in finding a job.

Sean Locklear, Dixie Youth Baseball Coach

Mr. Sean Locklear has volunteered as a coach in the Fairmont Dixie Youth Baseball program for several years. His concern is that participation in the baseball program drops as the kids get older. A major problem is getting enough adults to volunteer and help coach. Mr. Locklear said teamwork is a key to a child's success in the future. The more youth work together as a team when they are younger the more like they will work together when they get older and later when they join the workforce. He suggested forming basketball and football teams to supplement the baseball program to keep kids busy year round.

Perry Ashley, Town Commissioner

Commissioner Perry Ashley agreed that more volunteers are needed if current and future youth programs are to be successful. She said that today's youth are smart and can do much more than the low expectations that adults place on them. She wants to help inspire the young people of our community to do great things.

Audience Participation

Jan Tedder- Rogers, 300 Martin Street

Mrs. Jan Tedder-Rogers is the manager of Biggs Park Mall in Lumberton. She volunteered to come to the Heritage Center 3 or 4 times a month to give advice to youth on what an employer expects and how to dress.

Bethany Barnoski, FHS Sophomore

Miss Bethany Barnoski is a sophomore at Fairmont High School. She loves the idea of a dance. She also likes the idea of a career fair and suggested a possible youth lock-in.

Kim Ivey, 600 Mitchell Street

Mrs. Kim Ivey is a member of Oakton Baptist Church. Their church has had prayer walks in Fairmont. On the last Saturday of every month, they have a back yard Bible Club behind Bo's and Food Lion.

Commissioner Charles Townsend

Commissioner Charles Townsend is ready to do more than just talk. He is ready to look for the money to build a Boys and Girls Club for the youth in Fairmont.

Sandra Pridgen, Golf Course Road

Mrs. Sandra Pridgen felt the ideas mentioned tonight are a good start and hopes that action will be taken on them soon. She added that her son would be happy to volunteer and give baseball catching and pitching lessons when the weather turns warm.

Steven Marshall, FHS Sophomore

Mr. Steven Marshall, sophomore at Fairmont High School, used to participate in the Fairmont Police Explorers program that ended last year. He would like to see that program start back up.

Bridgit Bass, Old Stage Road

Ms. Bridgit Bass mentioned that not every child is interested in baseball or basketball. She suggested turning the vacant lot across the street from Heather's (corner of Cottage and Walnut Street) into a skate park. There is no skate park in this part of the state and it could draw kids from other areas as well. Her son suggested that a wall in town be designated just for graffiti art as a way for kids to express themselves.

Monte McCallum, Business Owner

Mr. Monte McCallum owns a business in downtown Fairmont. He is working toward getting a youth center in Fairmont. He suggested that some of the empty buildings in town could be turned into a small arcade or pool room. He volunteered his time to help with the youth and to pay the cost of the DJ and refreshments at the first youth dance.

Jeremy Jones, Student

Mr. Jeremy Jones would like to see a Boys and Girls Club with tutoring and a computer lab. He even suggested a YMCA with a swimming pool.

Angie Lovin, Business Owner

Mrs. Angie Lovin suggested communicating with local churches as a way to help spread the word about youth activities and get adult volunteers.

Rev. Chester Hopkins, Pastor, First Baptist North Main

Rev. Chester Hopkins is the Pastor of First Baptist Church on North Main Street. He said his church is willing to partner with the town on youth activities. He suggested focusing on the young men in the community.

Huel Faulk, 106 Jenkins Street

Mr. Huel Faulk suggested an X-Box or similar video game tournament with trophies.

Recommendations/Suggestions

Short Term Goals:

Mayor Kemp realizes that we cannot build a youth center right away. He suggested a short term goal of a Valentine's Day Dance on February 12 in the Fire Hall or other suitable location with a cost of \$2.00 to get in to cover the cost of the DJ and food. He said that dances could easily be done on a regular basis as long as there are enough adult volunteers to chaperone. Another short term goal is creating a Fairmont Youth Council, whose main responsibility will be coming up with activities for the youth in town. Finally, better communication will be the key to getting youth to participate and voice their concerns. Mayor Kemp will form a youth group email list to insure good communication.

Mayor Kemp announced that the next free movie in the Heritage Center will be Friday, January 29 at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Kemp announced that another Youth Forum would be held on April 13. The forum ended at 8:35 p.m.

Jennifer H. Larson, CMC
Town Clerk