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PRESIDENT KELLY AND MAYOR JONES NAME NEWPORT NEWS-CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT TASK FORCE MEMBERS

GROUP WILL STUDY DECISIONS ABOUT CNU'S LOCATION AND GROWTH

by [Jim Hanchett](#) | April 3, 2024

Read time: about 1 min

Christopher Newport University President William G. Kelly and Newport News Mayor Phillip Jones have named the final members of a task force that will research the decisions that determined the University's location and growth and the city's role in that development.

With the work of the Newport News-Christopher Newport Task Force as a foundation, the University and the city seek to acknowledge the past, preserve the Shoe Lane neighborhood's heritage, and pave the way for informed and equitable strategies moving forward.

The creation of the task force was announced Jan. 29. At that time, Vice Mayor Curtis Bethany and CNU Provost Quentin Kidd were appointed to serve as co-chairs.

President Kelly and Mayor Jones developed this formal charge and will share it with the task force:

We charge the task force with researching the removal of the historic Shoe Lane community and the expansion of the campus of Christopher Newport University. You will assess the circumstances that led to those decisions and their impact. We charge you to approach this work with integrity, diligence, and open minds. Your work has the potential to serve as a model for our Commonwealth and the nation at large for how institutions and cities can preserve and address the past while charting a path toward a just and inclusive future that includes the voices of all vested parties.

President Kelly and Mayor Jones are each naming two additional members of the task force:

President Kelly's appointees:

- [Regina Brayboy '84](#), chair of the President's Council on Diversity and Inclusion at Christopher Newport and a member of the University's Board of Visitors.
- [Vidal Dickerson](#), Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer.

Mayor Jones' appointees:

- [Cleon Long](#), Newport News City Councilman, Central District 2, Seat B
- Joni Ivey, community leader and retired Chief of Staff for Congressman Bobby Scott.

As defined in the initial announcement about the formation of the task force, its goals and objectives include:

- Developing a comprehensive understanding of the decisions made by past community leaders regarding the placement of Christopher Newport College and the growth of Christopher Newport University and the potential impacts those decisions had on the citizens of Newport News.
- Developing options the city and Commonwealth of Virginia can explore to ensure the citizens of Newport News and this community are more fully served in the future.
- Providing recommendations based on the findings of the task force.

The city will collaborate closely with the community, CNU students, faculty, staff, alumni, and administration in this effort. Additionally, the task force will partner with legal counsel, historians, and experts in the field to identify the path forward. The task force's work will be accomplished in three phases: Phase I — research and understanding; Phase 2 — recommendations; and Phase 3 — implementation. A comprehensive report of the task force's findings is scheduled for a later date.

A timeline for the completion of the phases has not been established.
