



Aug. 27, 2016

A summary report to the community of the past year for the nonpartisan nonprofit Foothills Forum:

Highlights:

- The groundbreaking Foothills Forum Survey, mailed in October 2015 to 3,000+ Rappahannock mailboxes and P.O. boxes, netted response from 1,362 households – a robust 42 percent.
- The Internal Revenue Service reinstated our status as a tax-exempt nonprofit in December 2015.
- We held a day-long annual planning retreat for directors and staff in February 2016 at Greenfield, home of director Al Regnery and his wife Audrey.
- We secured Virginia-based nonprofit status with local agent Mike Brown in March 2016.

Program Activities:

- We moved forward with our initial agreement with Rappahannock Media. FF brought in independent researcher/reporter Christopher Connell to produce an in-depth, three-part series in April 2016 on the findings of the Foothills Forum survey. We followed up in August with a three-part series on the survey's top two issues – internet broadband and cell coverage – with distinguished reporting by Rapp's own Randy Rieland.
- We co-sponsored our first forum (w/ Rapp Media) on those topics at a packed house at Tula's.
- We attended the national Media Learning Seminar in Miami in early May. FF's three-person delegation (chair, vice chair and journalism advisory committee chair) gathered valuable information and connected with prospective partners, sources and potential funders.
- Raised \$10,300 in community support during Give Local Piedmont in early May.
- At the invitation of county administrators, chair Bud Meyer presented a summary of the FF Survey findings to the county's Board of Supervisors. Meyer also briefed the RLEP board during its annual strategic planning session and presented findings to other groups.
- We provided seed funding for the Rappahannock Record's GoFundMe campaign, enabling video recordings of Rappahannock official meetings uploaded to YouTube.
- We are pursuing works in progress: Gatherings with Under 40 Rappahannock, potential research on comprehensive planning, nonprofits, broadband and transportation.
- We met matching funding challenge to bring college intern Julia Fair to the county for the summer.

Outreach and Operations:

- We welcomed new and returning major donors and sustainers.
- We added to our social media presence (271 Likes on FB).
- We welcomed new directors (secretary Sheila Gresinger and Jan Makela) and thanked departing folks: Director Molly Peterson and independent contractor Rocío Loya.
- Secured directors & officers, errors & omissions and CGL insurance thanks to the persistence and diligence of director Stephen Brooks.
- Our community engagement and survey committees continue to plan community forums.