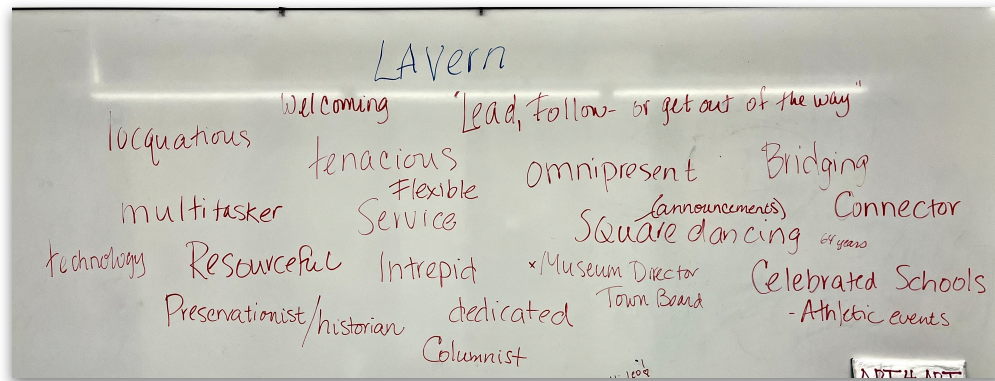


## Update / Recap: The LaVern Johnson Sculpture Project - Spring 2023

Christine Knapp, a renowned bronze sculptor from Lyons, has been asked, has agreed to take on, and has already created an maquette model and has presented it to an evolving exploratory working LaVern Johnson Sculpture Project committee that includes (*but not limited to*): Patty McNichol, Anita Miller, Jerry & Ron Johnson (LaVern's sons), Gil Sparks, Priscilla Cohan, Chrystal DeCoster, Jeanne Moore, John King, and artist, Christine Knapp.

A February 21<sup>st</sup> discussion as to why commemorations such as this are important to communities and their audiences, an initial enthusiastic brainstorming of adjectives, terms, affiliations, descriptors that most aptly harken LaVern, as well as ample shared stories and photos, all drummed-up lots of great *food for thought* for the artist.



*The brainstorming session to arrive at words that best describe LaVern was animated, heartwarming and kindly reflective.*

The small clay working model, with a very strong likeness to LaVern, presented on Wednesday March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Library was well received and the group excitedly voted to next present the model at the LAHC meeting on April 11<sup>th</sup> for approval to take the project forward by seeking permission to present it at the April 17<sup>th</sup> (TBD) Board of Trustees' Meeting at Town Hall.



Sons of LaVern Johnson, Ron and Jerry Johnson, holding the working maquette clay model by artist, Christine Knapp, on March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Library.

There's interest in also having Christine Knapp bring the piece for display at the LAHC's Tandem Art Shows' Opening. Reception from 5:30 to 7 at the Library - to get public reaction and input - and to build interest.

This image would be scaled up to 5'2", will allow shrinkage to 5' in the foundry process - a bit taller than LaVern in life. Her actual eyeglasses, belt and shoes will be cast and included into the final composition. Inclusion of her honorary chair, gifted to her after the 2013 flood, was also discussed.

An enveloping site has been earmarked in LaVern Johnson Park, surrounded by beauty in a natural niche created by cliffs, near the river, playground and picnic pavilion. It's been envisioned that the round base of the sculpture would have the quote she is most known for inscribed encircling it: **"Lead, follow or get out of the way."**



*The proposed "niche" site for placement and scale of the slightly larger than life-sized bronze LaVern Johnson sculpture in LaVern Johnson Park - situated near the river, playground and public picnic pavilion.*

The completed bronze sculpture, slightly larger than life-sized, and base would be bolted onto a local red stone mounting block. Adding an interpretive sign (\$2500? *perhaps with a map highlighting things throughout town that LaVern contributed to*), possibly some bas relief (*think raised imagery on a coin*) images to commemorate the things she's best locally known for (*square dancing, her throne, Museum, etc.*), a couple of stone benches to offer spots for contemplation / reflection, some subtle / easy-maintenance landscaping touches (*such as plantings / solar lighting, etc.*), and a **keystone walkway\*** leading to the sculpture - are all additional elements that might add to / enhance the overall presentation.



**\*keystone walkway** - A walkway akin to this concept could be created from brick pavers featuring contributors' names - possibly a key component in the fundraising efforts required to bring this LaVern Johnson Sculpture Project ultimately to completion.



*A very rough preliminary digital simulation of the possible placement of the Lavern Johnson sculpture by Christine Knapp of Lyons. Coloration and patina of the sculpture, plantings, benches, etc. - TBD.*

Sons Jerry and Ron Johnson have already promised 1/3 of the funding for the estimated \$40k LaVern sculpture itself; this allocation has given Christine assurance that this effort is backed with authentic interest and allows her to get started on bringing the model up to scale and begin discussions with her foundry.

The additional elements, depending upon what all items are decided upon, could bring the tally for the LaVern Johnson Sculpture Project to a ballpark \$150k. Fundraising efforts to be further fleshed-out as details are known and further approvals are attained.