

Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 7, 2022

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Iris Leigh Barnes, Maya Davis, Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby, Janice Curtis Greene, Marilyn Hatza, Edwin T. Johnson, Melvin Kelly, Steven X. Lee, Lopez Matthews, Adi Nkwonta, Cheryl McLeod, Honorable Kayce Munyeneh, Anthony Spencer, Torrey Snow, Elinor Thompson, Reggie Turner, and Tamara E. Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 a.m. by Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson.

Proof of Public Notice

Accepted by general consensus.

Welcome - Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson welcomed and thanked the public and the MCAAHC Commissioners for attending the public teleconferencing meeting. She also recognized Chair Lady Emeritus Mrs. Lyndra (neePratt) Marshall who gave greetings and Chair Dr. Wilson for the opportunity to speak at the meeting.

Chair Wilson gave room for Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby to address the public. Vice Chair Frisby wished everyone a very Happy Black History Month. He thanked the public for their great participation in joining the public meeting as well as attending the various programs presented by the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture and the Banneker-Douglass Museum.

Approval of the Minutes - Chair Wilson

Chair Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the December 6, 2021 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) Public Teleconferencing meeting. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Melvin Kelly seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair's Report-Chair Wilson

Chair Wilson said that she has continued the charge of Chairman Emeritus, Dale Glenwood Green in presenting as well as seeing that the MCAAHC Commission Handbook and Bylaw was completed with any additions or corrections that needed to be made by the commission. She called for a motion to accept both the MCAAHC Handbook and Bylaws. Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Barbara Paca seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair Wilson reported that in the month of December that the MCAAHC finalized their plan that would go before the Maryland Legislative Assembly.

- She reported that the bill is in draft form where the commission is working with Speaker of the House, Ms. Adrienne Jones and Delegate Shaneka Henson's office on the sponsorship of this bill.
 - Chair Wilson thanked the commissioners for the advocacy work that has been given to this matter.
 - As soon as the bill number is presented to the MCAAHC, it will be shared with the stakeholders as well as the public.

Director's Report -*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton greeted everyone and gave her report on the activities for the month of December 2021 and February 2022.

She thanked the BDM Staff for moving forward and pressing beyond the challenging winter weather to provide great programming, initiatives, tours and outreach to the public.

- **Kwanzaa Unity Celebration program.** On Saturday, December 11th, the BDM had its end of the year stellar Kwanzaa program that took place in the BDM.
 - Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, resident griot, led a wonderful storytelling session for all who enjoyed.
 - Commissioner Cheryl McLeod gave a powerful Kwanzaa Kinara Lighting Celebration ceremony sharing the history about the significance of the principles.
 - Ms. Nikki Brooks provided a sculpture project for families.
 - 80 individuals attended this affair.
 - Food, dancing and other great amenities were shared due to the grant support given for this provide.

- **The Mountain Top Program.** The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland asked that the MCAAHC as well as the BDM host their Black History Month Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King.
 - Chair Rev. Dr. Wilson gave a keynote address, Executive Director Compton and the BDM gave a video highlighting Dr. King's "Mountain Top" speech.
 - This video can be found on the museum's YouTube channel.

- **Black History Month 365.** The BDM and Historic Annapolis have a great relationship where they have launched a Black History Month 365 program in Anne Arundel County.
 - The BDM is spearheading this initiative while Visit Annapolis has developed a landing page on their website.
 - This gathering meets with local heritage partners in Anne Arundel County to give advisement on Black History Month programs all year long.

- **The 1619 Project.** Executive Director Compton gave room to Program Director, Sabriyah Hassan who shared information regarding this project.
 - Director Hassan shared that the BDM has collaborated in a partnership project with Baltimore Read Aloud to provide a reading program with Annapolis High School.
 - Annapolis High School has been having some challenges of late.
 - Annapolis High teacher, Ms. Odessa Harris thanked Director Hassan for the great opportunity to share in this program in receiving the great African American History through this book initiative.
 - 40 students are joined this program.
 - 400 books have been given to the students showcasing authentic black history in public.

- **Benjamin Banneker-Andrew Ellicott Mural Unveiling.** On Saturday, February 5th, the BDM hosted a hybrid mural unveiling program.
 - 400 people watched this event online.
 - This mural unveiling was able to take place due to the advocacy of Chair Lady Lyndra (neePratt) Marshall and Commissioner Steven X. Lee in securing the mural from a State of Maryland rest stop where the mural was going to be demolished.

- **Teen Sculpture Workshop.** This program will take place on Saturday, February 12th from 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
 - This program will explore the various African American symbols in quilting from the Underground Railroad.
 - One can find sculpture designs of Mr. David Hayes on view throughout downtown Annapolis.

- **Reparations Now Program.** This program will consist of a virtual discussion that will take place on Thursday, February 18th from 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
 - The public will have the opportunity to delve into a great thought process of what reparations mean moving forward.

- **Freedom Bound, Run Always of the Chesapeake Exhibit**-This exhibit is still available for that contain stories of nine enslaved Africans and two indentured servants that will be exhibited until March 1st.
 - Executive Director Compton admonish the public to come and to enjoy.
 - A virtual component is available for those that would like to see the exhibit and enjoy the engagement of this exhibit.

- **Ms. Gallery Martisse.** Ms. Schillica Howard, BDM's Curator of Collections will be working with Ms. Martisse who is the only black artist that has a gallery in the State of Maryland.
 - Collectively they will be collaborating on recognizing the great art of African Americans from the State of Maryland.

- **BDM Renovations**
 - Director Compton shared that it is the museum and commission's desire to restore the Mt. Moriah AME Church and museum back to its glory.
 - Future plans are in place to have:
 - WIFI throughout the museum
 - BDM's HVAC system to be totally replaced.
 - Restoration of the wooden floor in the Mt. Moriah AME Church.
 - Director Compton thanked the MCAAHC Commission and the public for their continued support on all of BDM's endeavors.
 - She also gave a special thank you to Chair Rev. Dr. Wilson for all of hard work in attending all of the museum's programs and events.

Finance Committee Report-Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby

Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby reported that *the MCAAHC and the BDM has done very well and are in better financial shape than they've been in a while.*

- *The goal was for the commission was to raise \$140,000 by the end of this month.*
 - *To date, \$117,000 has been raised thus far.*
 - *If \$60,000 is raised by June, the commission will be way over its goal.*
 - *Vice Chair Frisby commended the Foundation of the Banneker-Douglass Museum for raising \$70,000 in assets.*

Public Relations Committee-Commissioner Maya Davis, Chair

Commissioner Maya Davis shared that the Public Relations Committee (PR) met on January 20, 2022.

- The members present for this meeting were: Commissioner Elinor Thompson, Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh, Commissioner Torrey Snow, and Commissioner Maya Davis.
- Commissioner Davis shared that the following items were spotlighted this meeting:
 - The Pendulum Newsletter
 - The MCAAHC website.
 - The Maryland Lynching, Truth and Reconciliation updates.

- **The Pendulum** is a digital newsletter of the MCAAHC that provides great information.
 - The PR Committee has been working with Commissioner Adi Nkwonta and Commissioner Cheryl McLeod, Co-chairs of the Harriet Tubman Bicentennial Committee.
 - They will be supplying four articles where each article will honor Harriet Tubman.
 - ☐ The March newsletter will be focusing on honoring the Black Family.
 - ☐ The next newsletter will also spotlight "Black First" which includes: Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh, First Black Female Mayor of the City of Cheverly, Maryland.
 - ☐ Other publications will be focusing on health and wellness of the African American community.

- The PR committee asks that if one has any great African American History of Maryland to please let the committee members know so that it can be showcased in the newsletter.
- o **The MCAAHC website:** Commissioner Davis shared that the PR Committee was excited in seeing things come into fruition for the MCAAHC website since the last MCAAHC public meeting.
 - MCAAHC Commissioners bios have been updated and uniformly streamlined.
 - A landing resource page has been established where past minutes and agendas are being added for the public to see.
 - ☐ A five-year plan is set to be established for this endeavor.
 - A landing news pages has been established for the Pendulum newsletters from fall and spring of 2021.
 - ☐ The PR Committee is currently working with Ms. Schillica Howard, BDM Curator of Collections to get past Pendulum newsletters digitized to be placed on the MCAAHC’s website.
 - Other things discussed at the PR Committee meeting was:
 - ☐ The MCAAHC’s emblem to be added to the website.
 - ☐ Updating and adding more MCAAHC Commissioner Images to the website.
 - ☐ A list of past MCAAHC Commissioners that served with the MCAAHC over the years.
 - Commissioner Elinor Thompson will be working on this particular list to be added to the website.
 - Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh and Commissioner Torrey Snow are working on repositioning the MCAAHC on social media sites to share all of the great work the commissioners are doing across the State of Maryland.
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- o **The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (MLTRC):** Commissioner Davis shared that she serves as the liaison for the MCAAHC on this committee.
 - The commission had one hearing last year that came from Alleghany County.
 - The pandemic placed a halt on the other hearings that were planned for the rest of the year.
 - The MLTRC has been able to hire a public hearing coordinator from the Emit Till Grant.
 - ☐ This individual will:
 - Help the MLTRC to help prepare their hybrid meetings.
 - Coordinate with the county coalitions to do public hearings.
 - Hire a genealogical consultant firm Heritage firm organization to do their research for most of the coalition to do research on lynching’s throughout the State of Maryland so that the MLTRC can give their recommendation to make reconciliation.
 - The first hearing will take place on Saturday, March 26, 2022 from Harford County.
 - o Commissioner Iris Barnes will be a part of this process.

Ektonia Beach Report-Commissioner Anthony Spencer

Commissioner Anthony Spencer shared that a collaborative group has come together to raise funds for the last 5 acres of land that was a part of the historical black beach known as Carr's and Sparrow's Beaches.

- These beaches were a major hub for blacks to swim and see great legendary acts likes James Brown
- Carr's and Sparrow's Beach used to be 188 acres of land.
- Partnerships have been established with:
 - Senator Sarah Elfreth of Anne Arundel County.
 - Gavin Buckley, Mayor of Annapolis, Maryland
 - Stuart Pittman, Anne Arundel County Executive
 - Chesapeake Conservancy, National Conversationalist Specialist Group
 - Vince Leggett, CEO, Blacks of the Chesapeake
- To date, the following organizations have backed this project in giving various funding denominations:
 - Chesapeake Conservancy-\$6.45 million.
 - State of Maryland Government-\$1.2 million.
 - U.S. Senator Ben Cardin has requested \$2 million.
- Commissioner Spencer shared that he was asked to join this committee to not only preserve this historical land project but to also secure and preserve other projects that the MCAAHC is working on around the State of Maryland.

BDM Committee Report-Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, Co-Chair

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene took a moment to wish everyone a very Happy Black History Month. She also took a moment to recognized Commissioner Reggie Turner on having a baby boy.

- Commissioner Greene said that BDM Committee consists of the following Commissioners: Edwin T. Johnson, Co-Chair; Maya Davis; Commissioner Cheryl McLeod; Commissioner Adi Nkwonta and Dr. Barbara Paca and the BDM staff.

She reported that the BDM Committee is working on the 2022 Black Symposium Conference.

- September 16th and 17th will be the dates of the conference.
- The theme will be the Pursuit of Health, Happiness, and Wellness of the African American Community.
- This will be an intergenerational conference that will feature groups such as:
 - Jack and Jill
 - Boys and Girls Club of America
 - Youth of the NAACP
 - If one has any other youth organizations that you would like to have be a part of this conference, please send them to Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene.
 - Ms. Sabriyah Hassan, BDM Programs Director, will be collaborating with many of the organizations and groups for this conference.
- The conference will be a two day affair.
- It is the desire for this conference to have medical professionals to share information on the many medical fields young people can aspire to make careers in.
 - There will be leaders in their various respective fields to provide materials to help enlighten the youth on the various that they can build in the medical field.
 - Commissioner Curtis Greene turned the floor over to Commissioner Cheryl McLeod and Commissioner Adi Nkwonta, Co-Chairs of the Harriet Tubman Committee.

Harriet Tubman Committee Report-Commissioner Cheryl McLeod and Commissioner Adi Nkwonta, Co-Chairs.

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod gave a report that:

- Harriette Tubman Committee is a subcommittee of the BDM Committee.
- The committee consists of the following commissioners:

- o Commissioner Cheryl McLeod
- o Commissioner Adi Nkwonta
- o Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene
- o Commissioner Melvin Kelly
- o Commissioner Maya Davis
- o Executive Director Chanel Compton
- o Ms. Sabriyah Hassan
- o Event Stream Team
- This committee celebrates Harriet Tubman 365 days in the year.
- The month of March has been designated by the State of Maryland for the bicentennial celebration of Harriet Tubman.
 - o No one knows the particular date that she was born but on March 10th she passed away.
 - o The month of March is also Women's History Month.
 - The committee felt that it only makes sense to recognize the contributions of the history of powerful women, history and culture.
 - A culminating event will take place on Saturday, March 26th with a video history contest that will be open to everyone in sharing how one moves the spirit of Harriet Tubman.
 - All grade levels, ensembles and walks of life are invited to participate in this affair.
 - Everyone that participate in this affair will win a price of:
 - ☒ Monetary prizes
 - ☒ 1619 Project book
 - ☒ Baltimore Oriole Tickets
 - Any videos submitted by the public is owned by the MCAAHC and the State of Maryland.
- Commissioner Adi Nkwonta called for a motion to accept the Harriet Tubman Committee's endeavors to move forward with this effort. The MCAAHC Commissioners unanimously seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Harriet Tubman History Presentation-Commissioner Maya Davis

Commissioner Maya Davis shared that her initial work began with working with Mr. Lou Fields who focused on recognizing Harriet Tubman with an annual Legacy Day.

- This affair would go on to recognize Harriet Tubman in Annapolis, Maryland but extend to the many counties and the State of Maryland abroad.
- All of this began in the year 2000.
- Mr. Fields brought together the:
 - o Maryland Department of Tourism
 - o four HBCU's in and around Maryland
 - o Members of the General Assembly
 - o Family members of the Harriet Tubman Family.
- Mr. Fields was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award.
 - o Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene received this award.
- Commissioner Maya Davis provided a great extensive historical presentation of Harriet Tubman and dedicated her presentation to Mr. Harris Johnson, a past recipient of the AAHPG.
 - o Mr. Johnson to significant hours in making sure Harriet Tubman was significantly recognized.

Harriet 200, Heather Erst, Maryland Office of Tourism

Heather Erst came to the MCAAHC meeting to share that the Maryland Office of Tourism is available to market all of the great efforts of recognizing Harriet Tubman.

- Her office has been working on “Harriet 200” for many years.
 - February 16, 2022, is when all major marketing pushes throughout the State of Maryland will take place for the many affairs.
- She was glad to share that the National Geographic Best in The World 2022 has placed Maryland’s Eastern Shore as one of the best top 5 places to travel.
 - Heather shared that this was a huge recognition to share on the landscape of Harriet Tubman and what the Eastern Shore has to provide.
- It was also listed on Twitter that the Eastern Shore was one of the top places to go for African American History.
- Southern Living also listed the Eastern Shore as one of the best places to visit in 2022.
- The weekend of March 12-15th, the Maryland Office of Tourism will be spotlighting:
 - Harriet Tubman
 - Items from Ben Ross home
 - Special Presentations given where Governor Larry Hogan will be in attendance.
 - Heather shared that people are coming locally and domestically for these festivities.
- On September 10, 2022, there will be an unveiling of an indoor statue of Harriet Tubman statue in Cambridge, Maryland.

Presentation from Maryland Center for History & Culture, *Executive Director Mark Letzer*

Executive Director Letzer gave the floor to Judge Wanda Heard to share words.

The Honorable Judge Heard thanked the MCAAHC for the opportunity to speak at the public meeting.

- She shared that she was glad to work with the Maryland Center for History & Culture (MCHC) and to work with leaders of this statewide museum.
 - Judge Heard said that there isn’t anyway one can have a museum of this magnitude and not share the history and collections of Maryland’s African Americans.
 - Formerly, the Maryland Historical Society now called: the Maryland Center for History & Culture has partnered with and supported many history museums in the past. She shared that a stronger relationship is needed.
 - Many African American museums and schools history has not been heavily recognized through the MCHC of which this organization seeks for greater partnership today.
 - Executive Director Letzer shared that the organization seeks inclusion as part of their purpose.

Executive Director Letzer shared that the MCHC is an institution with renewed values and mission.

- All leaders and individuals of the MCHC are committed to the preservation of our shared history and intentionality to all individuals, educators, scholars in an inclusive and meaningful way.
- It is the only statewide museum of Maryland’s History.
- The MCHC is steward of many great artifacts of Maryland’s African American history representing blacks back to the 18th century.
- Many great African American items like:
 - Benjamin Banneker’s Journal has been loaned to the Banneker-Douglass Museum.
 - Largest collections of portrait produced by Joshua Johnson from Washington County in Hagerstown, Maryland is secured there.

- o Focus of news wide coverage materials have been sent from the MCHC and have been given on loan to the Smithsonian in Washington, DC.
- Executive Director Letzer said that the organization changed their name to the MCHC as a turning point in September 2020.
 - o He shared that the MCHC works with many of the MCAAHC Commissioners and looks for the MCHC to be a turning point of conversation and collaboration with the commission and other heritage organizations.

Adjournment

Chair Wilson called for a motion to adjourn the MCAAHC Public Teleconferencing meeting. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Steven X. Lee and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant