

Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 6, 2022

Washington County Museum of Fine Arts

401 Museum Drive

Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby, Janice Curtis Greene, Edwin T. Johnson, Melvin Kelly, Cheryl McLeod, Anthony Spencer, Torrey Snow, Elinor Thompson, Reggie Turner, and Chair, Tamara E. Wilson.

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

Proof of Public Notice

Accepted by general consensus.

Welcome - Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners and public for joining them at the beautiful Washington County Museum of Fine Arts in Hagerstown, Maryland. She shared that it has been two years since the commissioners have been able to meet with each other and the public in person.

Chair Rev. Wilson gave room for Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby to give the official welcome. Vice Chair Frisby addressed the public, shared that this was the commission's second year returning to the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts. He took the moment and thanked the commission and public for their success on the Jonathan Street project. Vice Chair Frisby said that it was his extreme pleasure to be back in Hagerstown, Maryland with the public.

Vice Chair Frisby shared that before the voting for the chair and vice chair positions take place later in the meeting, that this will be his last time serving as vice chair for the MCAAHC. Chair Rev. Dr. Wilson and the MCAAHC Commissioners thanked Vice Chair Frisby for his many years of dedicated service as vice chair to the MCAAHC as well as the public. She also said that she looks forward to Vice Chair Frisby serving in various committees with his great leadership capacity as his schedule allows.

Approval of the Minutes - Chair Wilson

Chair Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the April 4, 2022, Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) Public Teleconferencing meeting. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Anthony Spencer seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair's Report-Chair Wilson

Chair Wilson said that this is an historical time for the MCAAHC. She is pleased to report that the legislative initiatives have been very successful.

- Senate Bill 953, "Senator Verda Welcome Act" was passed.
 - This law states that the MCAAHC is now an independent agency within the State of Maryland Governmental system.
 - It allows the commission to continue to do the work incredible work that has been done over the last 50 years.
- There also is an increase in the commission's budget.
 - The budget has gone from \$600,000 to \$1.6 million dollars.
 - The MCAAHC is being oriented by the Governor's Office of Finance Administration on how to govern as an independent agency.

- MCAAHC Executive Leadership is meeting with GOFA on the State of Maryland Budget Process.
- Chair Wilson, Executive Director Compton and the BDM staff are working together on establishing an operational plan around staffing, programming and facilities.

Chair Wilson reported that House Bill 1088 focuses on the MCAAHC's African American Heritage Preservation Grant growing from \$1 million to \$5 million.

- Countless number of requests have been submitted to the MCAAHC from the public where in the past the commission was not able to meet all of the needs of preservation around the State of Maryland.
- Now the commission is able to fund more projects with greater technical support for African American Heritage in Maryland.
 - Chair Wilson thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners and the public for their calls and support to seeing that this bill was passed.
 - A strategic plan and a task force that will be led by Executive Director Compton with the commission, public and the BDM staff.
 - Chair Wilson took the moment to allow the MCAAHC and the public to celebrate.

Director's Report -*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton greeted everyone, thanked them for coming to the public meeting as well as recognized the BDM staff.

Director Compton shared that Banneker-Douglass Museum is the State of Maryland's Official Repository of African American History and Culture.

- The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

She gave her report on the activities for the months of April and May 2022.

- **BDM Visitation**
 - The BDM has garnered significant growth the various media and marketing strategies.
 - BDM'S YouTube page contains educational resources, programs and events to be replayed and enjoyed by all.
 - There are 133 subscribers which is an 8% increase from the previous month.
 - ☒ April BDM's website visitation was: 1,177 followers.
 - ☒ April onsite visitation was: 678 visitors.
 - ☒ April Facebook: 1,959 likes; 4,880 individuals reached.
 - ☒ April Instagram: 1,671 followers; 7688 reached. This is a 3% percent increase from the following month.
 - ☒ May BDM's website visitation was: 985 followers.
 - ☒ May onsite visitation was: 692 visitors.
 - ☒ May Facebook: 1,964 likes; 2,993 individuals reached.
 - ☒ May Instagram: 1,696 followers; 1,410 reached. This is a 3% percent increase from the following month.
- **Special Projects**
 - MCAAHC-BDM Website merge.
 - Daily Hive & Visit Annapolis Press Visit
 - Jay Fleming & the Maryland Office of Tourism Visit
 - LinkedIn Page Cultivation
 - Calvert Prize Event Press
 - BDM Summer Interns (Marketing and General Museum Interns)
- **Administrative and Building Report**
 - Three volunteers gave a total of 22 hours of their time for the month of May.

- The compressor for the Mt. Moriah AME Church part of the museum is in the process of getting fixed.
 - Purchase orders are being prepared by the Governor’s Office of Finance & Administration.
 - Lights have been repaired in BDM’s permanent gallery’s West African display case.

During the months of April and May, the BDM had six programs that were collaborated with HBCU’s in Maryland.

- These programs allowed the BDM to foster greater relationships and connections to larger audiences.
 - **“What’s all of The Fuss”** was a 1619 Project that took place at Bowie State University on April 6, 2022. This hybrid program focused on the education, history and thoughts on Critical Race Theory.
 - **“1619 Critical Race Theory Reading”** took place at Annapolis High School on April 23rd and May 25th.
 - BDM, Baltimore Read Aloud and the Lambda Delta Sigma Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. were the sponsors for this endeavor.
 - **HONOR: “A Cultural Change”** will be available to the public from April 12th-June 27, 2022.
 - **Upcoming Exhibitions**
 - **“Treasures from the Collections”** will be available from June 4th-August 13, 2022.
 - **“The Radical Voices of Blackness Speaks of Resistance and Joy”** will be available from September 10th-September 30, 2022.
 - **“1619 Project: A Public Mural”** will take place on June 11th from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at the BDM where all are welcome to participate in creating this public mural that will be showcased at the BDM.
 - **Juneteenth Celebration at the Annapolis, Maryland City Docks, sponsored by Ms. Phyllis T. Adams will take place on Saturday, June 18th at 12:00 p.m.**
 - ☒ All MCAAHC Commissioners, BDM Staff, the BDM Foundation as well as the BDM Friends are welcome to come together and march in this celebratory parade.

On Saturday, May 20, 2022, from 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. former MCAAHC Chairman Ted Mack will attend the Calvert Memorial Ceremony as well as receive the coveted Calvert Memorial Award.

- This legendary, historical, award is presented by the Maryland Historical trust where it is only given to individuals who have made a significant impact and contributions to preservation in the State of Maryland.
 - Chairman Theodore Mack is the first African American to receive this award.

Finance Committee Report-Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby

Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby reported that the MCAAHC is \$35,000 in meeting its goal. He also said that it was great to acknowledge that the MCAAHC received \$4 million for the AAHPG as well as \$1 million dollars for the BDM but a typical government museum relies heavily on donations from the public.

- The finance committee will be continuing to reach out to the public for financial support.
- The budget will start soon for recognizing the MCAAHC as an independent agency.

Vice Chair Frisby turned the floor back over to Chair Wilson.

Chair Wilson thanked Vice Chair Frisby for his report and said that she was very happy to say that collectively the MCAAHC has \$6.6 million provided by the State of Maryland.

- While this is a very powerful moment in the MCAAHC’s history she shared that the MCAAHC is still short \$35,000 of reaching its financial goal.

- Chair Wilson shared that she is going to donate \$500 towards this goal and was asking 6 other individuals to do the same.
 - Vice Chair Frisby donated \$500,
 - Commissioner Melvin Kelly donated \$10,000.
 - ☐ Chair Wilson said that by this act of kindness and others donating funds, the MCAAHC will supersede their goal.

BDM Committee Report-Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene & Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, PhD Co-Chairs

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene took a moment to share that she was going to report the MCAAHC Symposium as well the Harriet Tubman Sub Committee.

- 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.

The BDM Committee had a meeting regarding the 2022 Black Symposium Conference sponsored by the MCAAHC.

- Commissioner Greene took a moment to share the vision and mission of MCAAHC.
 - While it is the mission and vision of the MCAAHC to preserve, promote, document and present Maryland's African American History, it is also done in programs and events.
- With that charge, the theme for the conference will be "The Pursuit of Health, Healing, and Wholeness of the African American Community."
- The conference will be held Thursday, October 27th and Friday, October 28th at the historic Morgan State University.
 - Morgan State University was the first HBCU to offer a liberal arts degree as shared by Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson.
 - This conference will focus on providing technical support, professional development, and capacity building training.
 - Subjects such as: fundraising, executive leadership, operational and strategic planning for African American Heritage sites, museum advocacy, marketing as well as training on the Maryland African American Heritage Preservation Grant will be taught.
 - Commissioner Elinor Thompson has agreed to teach on preserving African American Cemeteries.
 - Commissioner Reginald Turner will be doing a teaching session on how he preserved the historical Jonathan Street site in Hagerstown, Maryland.
 - Chair Wilson has been asked to teach a session on commission advocacy that was done in increasing the funding for the MCAAHC as well as the BDM.
 - Executive Director Compton has been asked to share her knowledge on museum management.
 - ☐ It was suggested that attendees receive a certificate for the order of completion.
 - ☐ Box lunch will be served for all registered guests.
 - ☐ Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson is having Morgan State University's Digital team to stream and provide all technical services.
 - ☐ Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson has secured the 200th Suite of the Morgan State University Student Ball Room Center.
 - Free parking is provided and is adjacent to the center.
- A youth component will take place at Morgan State University where this will be revisited at the committee's next meeting.

- ☒ The Growing Griot Literacy Group will present a remote program.
- ☒ An Anti-Bullying training will take place by Dr. Leah Hollace.
- ☒ Understanding Healthcare initiatives and options presentation will be given by Commissioner Adi Nkwonta.
- ☒ A tour will be given of historic Morgan State University.
 - It was suggested that the closing session be included on voting with a possible visit from Harriet Tubman.
 - Commissioner Cheryl McLeod will verify the timeline for voter registration at this conference.
 - ✓ Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson will secure the National Council Negro League of Women for this endeavor.
 - ✓ Ms. Sabriyah Hassan suggested that these programs be considered as the youth fellowship conference for 2022.
 - o Learning service hours will be considered for the youth conference sessions.

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

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod gave a report that:

- She thanked the subcommittee for doing a great job on this work.
 - o Governor Larry Hogan has extended the celebration of Shero, Harriet Tubman for a year.
 - o Commissioner McLeod shared at the MCAAHC meeting that the celebration of Harriet Tubman will extend into March of 2023.
- Commissioner McLeod said that every federal holiday that the country has, Harriet Tubman has touched.
 - o The country just celebrated Memorial Day and Harriet Tubman not only secured freedom for the 70 that she rescued from slavery, but Harriet commanded a raid in South Carolina that freed over 700 enslaved Africans.
 - Harriet Tubman has a tremendous impact on Title 9 that focuses on the role of the women.
 - o There will be a 4th of July celebration in Cherry Hill, Maryland that will spotlight the life of Harriet Tubman.
 - o Juneteenth will also celebrate the life of Harriet Tubman in Maryland.
 - o Commissioner McLeod wanted to recognize all of the MCAAHC Commissioners who have taken a major participatory role in the Harriet Tubman Bicentennial celebration.
 - All subcommittees will receive a hand signed certificate and gift from Commissioner McLeod and Commissioner Adi Nkwonta.

MCAAHC Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Melvin Kelly gave a report that he is looking to do a group driving tour of Harriet Tubman Byway on the Eastern Shore.

- He also shared that the Harriet Tubman Foundation Board of Howard County, is the school he attended in 1953 will be looking to have renovations made to the school.
 - o This building is a part of the Howard County Recreation and Parks Division.
 - Commissioner Kelly shared that the annual Harriet Tubman Day will take place on September 18, 2022. All are welcomed.

Commissioner Anthony Spencer reported that he sang around the world but the Juneteenth Celebration in Annapolis, Maryland was the most accessible celebration that he has ever seen.

- With the great amenities provided with shuttling people, parking, and all levels of cultural engagement, Commissioner Spencer admonished that as many that can come to Annapolis, Maryland and enjoy this great affair.

Commissioner Elinor Thompson gave a report that as far as her other duties, being a part of the Public Relations Committee. She and her board members are constantly looking for new commissioners to represent other parts of the State of Maryland.

- She shared that she lives in Southern Anne Arundel County and has been promoting the African American Heritage Preservation Grant.
- Commissioner Thompson said that she is working with the cemetery preservation group where she found several new discoveries of Masonic Lodges in the area where Harriet Tubman may have come through the Patuxent area.
 - She has spoken to the landowners where they are considering sharing information about the secret hideaway areas of Harriet Tubman on their land.
 - Commissioner Thompson continues to advocate for the MCAAHC when she visits Calvert and St. Mary's County.
 - She found two impoverished slave cabins that were found below the Historic Sotterley Plantation.
 - Commissioner Thompson admonished the owner of the land to not have the slave cabins torn down and apply for the AAHPG program.

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene gave great historical information on the powerful significance of Juneteenth, how Texas was an independent state and how Mexico challenged Texas in why they had to free their slaves.

- Colored troops were a part of this significant change.
- Commissioner Greene has been asked by Commissioner Cheryl McLeod to do a reenactment of Harriet Tubman for the Howard County School of the Deaf Columbia Academy.
 - She will also be doing a reenactment of Harriet Tubman sharing the truth of Juneteenth at the Harriet Tubman By-Way on the Eastern Shore as well as will be doing a reenactment at the Benjamin Banneker Historical Park in Baltimore County, the county she represents on the MCAAHC.
 - Commissioner Greene will be at Historic Sotterley, Washington County, and Harve De Grace Maryland delivering the truth about Juneteenth.

Commissioner Dr. Edwin T. Johnson gave a report that now that things seem to be returning to normal, he is looking to resurrect the Loudon Cemetery project in Baltimore, Maryland.

- Commissioner Johnson is looking forward to working with Commissioner Thompson in receiving assistance on this endeavor.
 - Before Covid, for Memorial Day, the MCAAHC sponsored a program of placing American Flags and recognizing the U.S. Colored Troops that were buried there.
 - He is looking to continue this endeavor in 2023.
- Commissioner Johnson shared that there is a major project that he is working on. He is looking to secure a document of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass that Bowie State University has that he would like to showcase at Morgan State University for the Baltimore City-Baltimore County HBCU week.
 - This is the first week of October.
- Commissioner Johnson is working on having a land marker sharing that in Preston Gardens near Saratoga Street, educated, affluent blacks lived in that great community.
 - Whites at one time didn't want these blacks to live near their community and considered the area to be a part of the slums to keep blacks away.
 - He shared that the person who is recognized over that area in preserving the history of whites is being recognized as a person of significance of that black community.

- Commissioner Johnson seeks to share and to preserve the essence, integrity, and truth of that African American community.

Commissioner Torrey Snow gave a report that he has working the major initiatives in preserving African American History of the Arts.

- Baltimore Concert Opera-is doing “Opera on the Happening” trying to reconnect the Penn North corner with the Arts Social Club.
 - Commissioner Snow and his group have been cataloging information on how some African Americans took advantage and made their living off of the training of the arts through piano lessons, music lessons, and vocal lessons with their connections through the State of Maryland.
 - In doing extensive reach, Commissioner Snow shared that blacks played a significant role in golf too.
 - His group is looking at how they can raise awareness and educate many about all of the different aspects of the African American community as well as the youth.
- Commissioner Snow has devised bus tours to places like, the Banneker-Douglass Museum, for those of different political parties to have a better understanding as well as expose them to the real African American History in the State of Maryland.
 - The visits to various heritage areas is being leveraged along with the information from the MCAAHC to present the truth to conservative Republican prominent politicians.

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod reported that she, Commissioners Maya Davis and Adi Nkownta attended the Maryland Lynching, Truth, and Reconciliation Commission (MLTRC) meeting that took place in Baltimore County.

- MLTRC hearings are continually being held throughout the State of Maryland.

Commissioner Reggie Turner thanked Governor Larry Hogan for allowing him to be the first person from Washington County to sit on the MCAAHC.

- Commissioner Turner thanked everyone that has helped him on his journey that has brought him to this place and time.
- He reported that the State Highway Administration will be providing a marker for Jonathan Street.
 - Commissioner Turner thanked Dr. Emily Amt for her help with the verbiage for the marker.
 - The ceremony will take place in either August or September 2022.
- Commissioner Turner has an appointment with the famous sculptor, Tony Mendez, where they are looking to have a famous African American sculpted and represented in Washington County.
 - Mr. Mendez is responsible for the Thurgood Marshall sculpture in downtown Annapolis, Maryland.
- Commissioner Turner shared a 3 minute teaser video about the Jonathan Street Community.
 - The video was produced by Three Rose Communication and Russ Hodges.
 - He then turned the floor over to Dr. Emily Amt to give a presentation on the Jonathan Street Community.

Guest Speakers

Dr. Emily Amt, Halfway African American Cemetery Project

Dr. Amt, gave a report that she and Educator Elizabeth Hall have been working on this endeavor.

- Collectively they are partners on this cemetery work located in Washington County.
- The cemetery was active from 1844 until 1932.
 - Free African Americans were buried there from Jonathan Street.
 - White farmers initially owned the farm land.
 - It was out in the country not connected to any church.

- o The land was “halfway” between Hagerstown and Williamsport, Maryland.
- o 50 years later, a black fraternal organization, The Hagerstown Lodge of the Independent Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria bought the 7 acres of the cemetery.
 - Ceremonies and programs were given recognized those that were interred there.
 - All the black churches in the area as well as those with no church affiliation were buried there. Those also buried there were:
 - 11 Civil War Veterans
 - Perry Moxley
 - A Pullman Porter
 - 300 known people
 - 100 unknown people

Ms. Sharon Hall, Executive Director of the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts

Executive Director Hall thanked Chair Wilson, the MCAAHC and the public for the opportunity to speak.

- She shared that she hoped everyone had the opportunity to tour the museum as well as see the Jonathan Street exhibition that is showcased until September 11, 2022.
- Executive Director Hall thanked Commissioner Reggie Turner for coming to the museum to have his exhibit showcase there and thanked him and the MCAAHC for having their public meeting at their museum.
- She said that as the new executive director, she moved to Washington County in 2020, heard about the rich history on Jonathan Street and wanted to provide a public venue for all to learn, enjoy, as well as partake of this great history for an extended period of time.
 - o Most of the artifacts were pretty small and unique.
 - o Executive Director Hall knew that they would be archived at the Maryland State Archives but thought it would be greatly recognized for the county’s history to be shared at their local museum for all to see.
 - o She feels that the Jonathan Street exhibit is about celebrating history, promoting preservation, sharing community stories, as well as presenting the important roles of museums as anchors of meeting and learning spaces.
 - Maryland Historical Trust, former MCAAHC Commissioner Lynn Bowman, Dr. Julie Schlabisky helped to do archaeology and history for this exhibit.

Voting for Chair & Vice Chair Positions

Chair Wilson turned the floor over to Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, MCAAHC Opens Meeting’s Act representative who governed the process for the nominations of the MCAAHC’s Chair and Vice Chair positions.

- She thanked Chair Wilson and Vice Chair Frisby for their work serving as leaders of the MCAAHC.

Voting for the Vice Chair Position

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene asked are there any nominations for the Vice Chair Position.

- Chair Wilson nominated Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson for the Vice Chair position.
- It was seconded by Commissioner Anthony Spencer.
 - o Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, humbly, accepted the nomination.
 - There weren’t any other nominations.
 - The floor was closed for nominations.
 - All MCAAHC Commissioners unanimously voted for Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson to serve as the new Vice Chair of the MCAAHC.

- ☐ Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson now serves as the Vice Chair of the MCAAHC for a year.

Voting for the Chair Position

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene asked are there any nominations for the Chair Position.

- Commissioner Anthony Spencer nominated Commissioner Dr. Edwin T. Johnson for the Chair position.
- It was seconded by Vice Chair Dr. Edwin T. Johnson.
 - Commissioner Rev. Dr. Tamara E. Wilson, humbly, accepted the nomination.
 - There weren't any other nominations.
 - The floor was closed for nominations.
 - All MCAAHC Commissioners unanimously voted for Commissioner Rev. Dr. Tamara E. Wilson to serve as the new Chair of the MCAAHC.
 - ☐ Commissioner Rev. Dr. Tamara E. Wilson now serves as the Chair of the MCAAHC for a year.

Adjournment

Chair Wilson then called for a motion to adjourn the MCAAHC Public Teleconferencing meeting. Vice Chair Dr. Edwin T. Johnson made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Anthony Spencer and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 1:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant