

## **Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture**

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 2, 2021

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Janice Curtis Greene, Marilyn Hatza, Edwin T. Johnson, Melvin Kelly, Lopez Matthews, Cheryl McLeod, Anthony Spencer, Elinor Thompson, Reggie Turner, and Tamara E. Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 11:12 a.m. by Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson.

### **Proof of Public Notice**

Accepted by general consensus.

**Welcome** - Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson.

### **Approval of the Minutes** - Chair Wilson

Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the June 6, 2021 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) public meeting. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson shared that he had one update where he would like to add Ms. Edna Mann's name to his report on the Fayette Street Community from June 6<sup>th</sup>'s public meeting. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Cheryl McLeod and Commissioner Marilyn Hatza both seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### **Officer Reports**

*MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

Chair Wilson gave a report on the joint statement of injustice and social inequity that the MCAAHC and the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Committee (MLTRC) has produced. She shared that:

- On June 18<sup>th</sup>, the MCAAHC and the MLTRC had a call-to-action press conference at the Banneker-Douglass Museum.
- There was a great turnout in person as well as through social media views for this joint press conference statement press coverage.
- Chair Wilson wrote an op ed for this joint statement that was released and shared in print media to the Annapolis Gazette newspaper.
- The MCAAHC & the MLTRC sought the support of The Honorable Madame Speaker Adrienne Jones as both commissions presented their four areas of concern. They were:
  - Participation and promotion of the commissions Anti-Racism Training initiatives.
  - Increase funding for the Banneker-Douglass Museum.
  - Increase funding for the MCAAHC's African American Heritage Preservation Grant.
  - Legislation for the removal of Confederate statues from around the State of Maryland properties.
    - Chair Wilson asked that the MCAAHC Commissioners send out this joint statement as well as schedule visits with their local officials before the next Legislative Maryland General Assembly.
    - She also encouraged the public to read the join press release statement found on the MCAAHC's website.

Chair Wilson said that, at the request of Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, she and Executive Director Chanel Compton met with the executives of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, the Lt. Governor's Chief of Staff as well as

the Governor's Legal Counsel regarding the legislated oversight that the MCAAHC has over the Banneker-Douglass Museum and its staff.

- From this meeting it was also shared as well as defined what the roles of the MCAAHC and GOCI has in relationship to the executive director and the BDM.
  - Chair Wilson said that in years past, there was some confusion as to what jurisdiction the MCAAHC has.
  - Three key things were determined from this meeting. They are that:
    - 1. The MCAAHC provides complete oversight of the BDM.
    - 2. The executive director reports directly to the MCAAHC, serves at its pleasure as well as is responsible for the supervision of its personnel.
    - 3. GOCI's responsibility is to play an administrative role in assisting with payroll, fiscal and personnel needs, providing support to the State of Maryland procurement processes, and assisting with travel reimbursement expenses.
  - Chair Wilson shared that the MCAAHC Commissioners will receive a full copy of this report to have for their records.

Chair Wilson reported that recently, there were some administrative changes that have taken place at the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT).

- Currently, the MCAAHC is waiting on the receipt of the African American Heritage Preservation (AAHPG) Grant application.
- As soon as the application is provided from MHT, the MCAAHC's program committee will begin to move forward in ranking and reviewing the information on this grant.

Chair Wilson gave room for Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Chair of the Program's Committee to share information about the AAHPG.

- Commissioner Johnson said that 2021 marks the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the African American Heritage Preservation Grant being provided for institutions and organizations of historical significance in preserving African American History in the State of Maryland.
- He shared that there were a few concerns that was formally addressed regarding the AAHPG application and the commission's reach with this grant program.
  - The questions at hand were:
    - Did the AAHPG reach every part of the State of Maryland?
    - Are there trends that show where:
      - certain jurisdictions have received funding?
      - certain jurisdictions have not received funding?
      - certain geographical areas been successful with obtaining this grant?
      - certain geographical areas have not been successful in obtaining this grant and why not?
- Commissioner Johnson said that he and Executive Director Chanel Compton have personally traveled to various sites to see why there have been certain candidates that have not been successful in procuring this grant.
- He also shared that there are three new criterion that has now been added to the application.
  - 1) **Applicants would get points for a unique project that moved beyond the**

**traditional project that has applied in the past.**

- Traditional projects being churches, cemeteries as well as one room Rosenwald Schools to name a few.
- Unique projects where things like churches that had bowling allies or unique amenities that are rarely seen were designed to help to unite and bring the community together.
- **2) Unique points to be given to seldom selected sites.**
- **3) Jurisdictions that have never received this grant award.**
- Commissioner Johnson will have the new AAHPG application sent to the MCAAHC Commissioners through Special Assistant LeRonn Herbert once the committee approves the application.

**Director's Report**

*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton reported the following information for the BDM & the MCAAHC:

- She first recognized the BDM Staff and their hard work.
- Director Compton took a moment to pay homage to Commissioner Dr. Barbara Paca's son, Mr. Tilghman Paca who had recently passed. Director Compton said that Tilghman was a blessing to the MCAAHC, the BDM staff as well as had tremendous involvement with attending programs and events for the public.
- Director Compton also took a moment to recognize Ms. Gloria Richardson, Civil Rights Social Justice Leader that participated in the March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs by establishing a division in Cambridge, Maryland.
  - Ms. Richardson fought for equality and justice for those that lived on the Eastern Shore. There were inequalities of blacks receiving jobs as well as the process of desegregating movie theatres, dine in restaurants and other areas where blacks were treated unfairly.
- Director Compton also shared that over \$80,000 was raised by private donors, the public as well as the MCAAHC Commissioners that gave towards the MCAAHC 2020-2021 Anti-Racism Campaign.
- Director Compton said that the BDM developed and presented programming for deconstructing slavery, Frederick Douglass' "What Does the 4<sup>th</sup> of July mean to the Negro?" various anti-racism initiatives as well as producing the BDM's Youth Conference. She thanked the commission and the public for all of their help and support.
- BDM onboarded a financial company called, "A. Wheeler Consultants." Ms. Angela Wheeler, principal consultant will be working with the BDM Foundation, Friends of the BDM, as well as the BDM staff to improve capacity, programming, and exhibitions.
- The Bancker-Douglass Museum Foundation, Inc. (BDMF) received a \$75,000 grant due to a bond bill application that the foundation applied for.
  - WIFI capabilities and lighting enhancement will be installed and will take place at the BDM because of this grant.
  - A special thank you was given to Senator Sarah Elfreth, Delegate Dana Jones, and Delegate Shaneka Henson for their execution, consideration, and support with this process.

- In the month of July, Executive Director Compton reported that the BDM received:
  - A grant of \$14,000 from the Anne Arundel Arts Council.
  - A grant of \$5,000 from the City of Annapolis.
  - A \$10,000 private donation towards the repair and framing of the BDM mural.
- A Private Donor VIP Reception will take place on Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup> for all of the BDM's donors that have been a proud supporter of the museum's endeavors.
- The Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation (BDMF) now has an executive development committee that consists of: Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara Wilson, Ms. Sonya Swygert, and Executive Director Chanel Compton. Commissioners: Vice Chair Frisby, Adi Nkwonta, and Janice Curtis Greene are a part of this volunteer committee too.
  - This group was devised to support and thrust the MCAAHC and the BDM's financial initiatives.
- Mr. Chris Bonner, who was spotlighted on Netflix for his work on African American History in America, gave a presentation for the BDM's Juneteenth Celebration.
- From the Marketing Department, the Joint Press Release Conference Statement from the MCAAHC and the MLTRC received coverage from 11 media outlets.
  - Also, the BDM and MCAAHC's websites are being updated.
  - Director Robert James is in the process of interviewing candidates to serve as a marketing assistant to assist him with various marketing endeavors.
- BDM's HVAC system received some updates of six new fans & a new oil solenoid valve for pressure regulation. The BDM and GOCI are working on a capital budget plan to have the museum's HVAC replaced in a 3 to 5 year time span.
- The MCAAHC has been working with MHT on having racial equity firms to assist in reviewing the process of how grants had been distributed in the past. Some ethnic groups seemed to not be considered as awardees in the past.
  - A thorough process is being established to ensure that all candidates from various backgrounds be equally considered before any financial is released.
- BDM will be partnering with RFLM in sharing their "Freedom Bound Runaways of the Chesapeake" exhibit with an exhibition opening in September.

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

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene shared that she and Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson are the co-chairs.

- She also said that BDM Committee consists of the following members: Commissioner Maya Davis, Commissioner Cheryl McLeod, Commissioner Adi Nkwonta, and Commissioner Dr. Barbara Paca and the BDM staff.

Commissioner Greene reported that the group collectively met on Friday, July 23, 2021 to continue the work and progress on the MCAAHC-BDM Symposium initiatives.

- Commissioner Greene is working with Executive Director Compton on this approval process.

- Commissioner Greene has received to businesses intent to be videographers for this event.

The information for this powerful week is as follows:

**Opening - Sunday, October 10, 2021, 4:00 PM-5:30 PM – Rejoice (Hybrid Event)**

- The theme selected for this symposium is: “The Spirit of the Black Family: Rejoice, Renew, Remember, and Reclaim.”

**Educational/Informational Session - Wednesday, October 13, 2021, 6:00 PM-7:30 PM – “Renew” (Virtual Event)**

**Healing Ceremony - Saturday, October 16, 2021, 5:00 PM-7:00 PM – “Remember” (A Hybrid Event)**

**Anti-Racism Training Series Part III - Tuesday, October 19, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM – “Reclaim”**

*Individual Commissioner Reports*

- Commissioner Cheryl McLeod shared that she was on a Freedom Bus Tour on the Eastern Shore. This was to continue to support Ms. Gloria Richardson, Freedom Fighter, assist the residence in ending police brutality, discrimination as well as current day lynchings.
  - The group also made a stop at the Harriet Tubman Visitor’s Center to round off their day where Commissioner McLeod led several spiritual songs.
- Commissioner Elinor Thompson has been working with the MHT and the MCAAHC Cemetery working group report. The group has a concern about insufficient information and spacing on enslaved African or African Americans. The MD Department of Budget and Management are working on a budget to make sure financial equality is provided for those interred there.
  - The group is also making sure that the legislation for this process is being followed in Anne Arundel County and all counties.
  - Commissioner Thompson also shared that she will be presenting on Saturday, September 18, 2021 at the Captain Salem Avery House on “The Perils and Challenges of African American Cemeteries.”
  - Commissioner Reggie Turner reported that he is a part of the Western Maryland Community Development Corporation has been partnering with the Hagerstown Community College with the National Endowment for the humanities to produce a two part documentary. The documentary will be used for all humanities classes featuring the Jonathan Street Community. He shared that:
    - A ribbon cutting ceremony will take place on September 14, 2021 for the Jonathan Street Community Cabin.
    - He will be giving a walking tour of the Jonathan Street Community at the Miller House at Washington County Historical Society.
    - The Maryland Semi Sesquicentennial Commission 250 had its first meeting during the last week of July.
- Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene shared that the Maryland State Art’s Council has awarded \$65,000 in grant funding where she is also a recipient one of the 13 recipients of this award to teach a young person in black story telling.

- Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson shared that he gave a panel discussion and workshop on Juneteenth at the University of Maryland Global Campus.
  - He also said that he would like to see if Mr. Lou Fields could make a presentation as to what is taking place in Black Historic Tourism in Baltimore City and abroad.
  - Commissioner Johnson said that as the State of Maryland begins to go back towards normalcy he has invited all MCAAHC Commissioners to join him in placing flags at the Loudon Park Cemetery for the veterans that go back as far as fighting in the Civil War.

*New Business*

Chair Wilson shared that the Maryland Semi Sesquicentennial Commission was established by Governor Larry Hogan where there will be an inclusive celebration and observance of the 250 anniversary of the American Revolutionary War, Declaration of Independence, as well as the founding of the United States of America. This celebration will be for all of our country's people. Our country's history will be shared through civic and cultural events. Commissioner Steven X. Lee will be working in Chair Wilson's stead working along with Commissioner Reggie Turner.

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Marilyn Hatza, and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant