

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

Public Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 2, 2019

### **Harriet Tubman Jr.-Sr. High School**

8045 Harriet Tubman Lane  
Columbia, Maryland 21044

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Iris Leigh Barnes, Maya Davis, Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby, Janice Curtis Greene, Marilyn Hatza, Melvin Kelly, Steven X. Lee, Cheryl McLeod, Barbara Paca, Anthony Spencer, Elinor Thompson, Reggie Turner, and Tamara E. Wilson. The following Commissioners were absent: Lynn Bowman, Edwin T. Johnson, Lopez Matthews, and the honorable Kweisi Mfume,

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 thanked the public for attending and gave the floor to Commissioner Cheryl McLeod who was the host of this meeting.

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod shared that she is the MCAAHC Commissioner for Howard County and said that it was the commission's pleasure to have their meeting at the Harriet Tubman Jr.-Sr. School. She shared that this was the place where African Americans from Howard County went before desegregation. She thanked the public, the alumni, and welcomed Ms. Bessie Bordenave, Chair of the Tubman School Foundation to share words.

Ms. Bessie Bordenave welcomed the MCAAHC and the public to their facility. She said that her historic facility is open to all. Ms. Bordenave also took a moment to recognize Dr. Calvin Bell, County Executive for Howard County who gave a warm greeting and welcome at the meeting.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson recognized Mr. Winston Wilkinson, Chief of Staff for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives that came to the meeting.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 5, 2019 meeting. Commissioner Anthony Spencer seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### **Director's Report**

Ms. Chanel Compton gave greetings and shared that she is the Executive Director of the Banneker-Douglass Museum (BDM) and the MCAAHC. She took a moment to recognize BDM staff: Ms. Sabriyah Hassan, Program Director; Robert James, Marketing and Communication's Director and LeRonn Herbert, BDM Administrative Manager and Special Assistant for the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture.

Director Compton reported that the BDM is located in what was once the historic Mount Moriah African Methodist Episcopal Church located in downtown Annapolis Maryland at the church circle on Franklin Street. She said that the Mt. Moriah AME Church was built in 1874. Frederick Douglass gave his dedicatory address at the church in 1875. One hundred years later, the Mt. Moriah AME Church was threatened to be torn down into a parking lot. Through the work of the MCAAHC, the church was able to be safe and on February 24, 1984 the Mt. Moriah AME Church became the Banneker-Douglass Museum.

Director Compton shared that the mission of the Banneker-Douglass Museum is present, preserve, and celebrate African American History & Culture in the State of Maryland. She shared that museum's visitation has risen a little over 9,000 visitors of which the goal is to reach 10,000 visitors by the end of 2019. Director Compton said that this would be a landmark and the highest visitation that the museum has had in over 10 years with a limited staff.

Director Compton said that even though the museum is short staffed, the staff is on a quest to build capacity in the museum's staffing, programming, as well as build capacity in the museum's collection's management practices. She said that the commission and the museum had a "We Rise" gala fundraiser to support the mission of the commission and be a vital resource to the Banneker-Douglass Museum. This was done by engaging new donors to support the 2020 initiatives of the commission and the museum through this extravaganza. From this event the funding, which was received has helped to support the upcoming "The Black Vote Mural Project" as well as the "We Rise" Youth Conference for the summer in June.

Director Compton said that 2020 will be a powerful year with the presidential election upon us, the 100<sup>th</sup> celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment which gave women the right to vote, as well as the celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment that gave men the right to vote. From the help of the museum's new community partners, that are: activists, artists, educators, and scholars the museum is able to present African American History from multiple perspectives. This new exhibit has 16 mural artists, from the State of Maryland that will paint images that reflect the rich history of African Americans in the vote. This exhibit will be showcased the whole year of 2020 where guest speakers, lecturers and programs will take place as well. In conjunction with this exhibit there will be voter registration and a youth conference for the youth to produce from start to finish.

Director Compton rounded out her report by sharing that the BDM has the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the MCAAHC sharing its work where the commission began in 1969 to present day. The exhibit will be up until December 2019. Last but not least Director Compton admonished the public to come to the BDM and see "Verda's Place" the exhibit that spot lights the life and legacy of Senator Verda Welcome, Maryland and the United States' first black female senator. Because of her work and sacrifice, along with Dr. Benjamin Quarles, scholar of history, the MCAAHC was established, the Mt. Moriah AME Church was saved and Maryland's African American History was preserved.

Director Compton said that one can find out more about BDM's programs and event by going to BDM's website as well as by going to the museum's twitter and Instagram account.

## **Officer Reports**

*MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson shared in her officer's report that the MCAAHC is a 21 seat body that is appointed by Governor Larry Hogan for a four year term. She said that the mission of the commission is to discover, document, preserve, collect, and promote Maryland's African American Heritage. Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that it is the commission's goal to educate Maryland citizens and visitors to our state about the significance of black history here in the State of Maryland.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that her vision for the MCAAHC is to build on the foundation that has been set over the last 50 years to be the nation's premiere ethnic commission. She thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners and the public for taking time out of their busy schedule to come to the meeting.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson shared that October and November have been very busy months with implementing and planning programming and events in conjunction with the Director Compton and the Banneker-Douglass Museum. In addition this, she has had many meetings with legislators and community leaders. One group that has reached to her that she met with was the DuBois Circle.

The DuBois Circle asked Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson if she and the MCAAHC would consider a collaborative partnership with them, the Afro, and the Reginald Lewis Museum. The goal would be that all of the requested organizations work together to organize, share, and present activities that commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> year celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson brought this request to the commission to discuss what this collaboration would be like. She said that the DuBois Circle would: support the programs of the MCAAHC starting with the Black Mural Project as well as support the Reginald F. Lewis Museum (RFLM) programs. The Afro would be the media control center that would pull all of the programs together advertising what each organization is offering. The DuBois Circle will be looking into getting a grant to support an activity that all of the organizations would do together. This would not require any finances on the commission's part but work require the commission to support activities of the other partners as the partners would support the commission.

Vice Chair Herbert Frisby shared words that he thought that this was a great idea that the MCAAHC partner with the DuBois Circle. He said that the DuBois Circle is a very historical organization of black women that worked with Senator Verda Welcome in getting the commission established. Vice Chair Frisby also said that there is a tremendous overlap of support from the DuBois Circle supporting the MCAAHC as well as the RFLM that it is only right to be a part of this partnership.

Vice Chair Herbert Frisby made a motion to accept the offer presented by the DuBois Circle to join in a partnership with them, the RFLM, and the Afro. Commissioner Anthony Spencer seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson shared that she is on the Maryland Lynching Memorial Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was launched on September 12, 2018. She said that her role thus far is to work with the Ad Hoc Committee to develop the bylaws for this commission. At the November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting the commission unanimously voted the bylaws in. Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that she was appointed by the acting chair to serve on the Administrative and Logistics Committee where she will be bringing a report for that back to the commission.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that at the last MCAAHC public meeting, the committee voted on the recipients to receive the African American Heritage Preservation Grant. The year 2020 will be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the grant where the MCAAHC will be celebrating this accomplishment. Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson asked Commissioner Marilyn Hatza to lead this endeavor. She also said that she has been in talks with the Enoch Pratt Library to work on improving the AAHPG workshops. Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that she, Director Chanel Compton, and Commissioner Hatza will be working together on this program to get more improved applications across the State of Maryland.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary MCAAHC Gala Committee had a wonderful affair at the BDM. She thanked Director Chanel Compton, the BDM staff and the MCAAHC for all of their hard work in making this affair a great success. Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that she was so proud to represent the MCAAHC as well as to see all of the tremendous guests in attendance.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that Director Compton shared that there will be an annual gala sponsored by the MCAAHC. She shared that the commission will provide a gala as a fundraiser each year but it won't be to the extent of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In addition to this, Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson shared that the BDM has a replica portrait of Senator Verda Welcome housed in the temporary gallery room. This portrait was given by the Maryland State Archives to the BDM. She admonished the public to come, visit the museum, and see this great portrait. A replica portrait is housed at the Senate Building on the fourth floor.

#### *MCAAHC Vice Chair Herbert Frisby-Administration and Finance Committee*

Vice Chair Herbert Frisby began his report by congratulating the Harriet Tubman Foundation for the great work that has taken place at the Harriet Tubman Jr.-Sr. High School. He shared that foundation has come a long way with this project and he said that he was happy to see the tremendous progress. He asked that the MCAAHC and public give the Harriet Tubman Foundation an applause for their accomplishments.

Vice Chair Herbert Frisby shared that while the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, the State of Maryland, and the legislature have been very supportive, there has not been enough funding from the State of Maryland to support all of the commission's goals. He said that the commission is working with the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives and the State of Maryland legislature to increase the funding for the commission and the museum overall. Vice Chair Frisby said that God helps those that help themselves. With that being said, he shared that there are three things that he is going to focus on in his report; they are the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the "We Rise" Gala, the "We Rise" Gala campaign and the African American Heritage Preservation Grant.

Vice Chair Frisby said that with the "We Rise" Gala campaign, the commission has set a goal of raising \$500,000 for the year 2020-2021. So far the commission has raised \$125,000 where the commission is half of the way there. In regards to the gala, Vice Chair Frisby shared that with the ticket sales, financial contributions, and donations, the commission raised approximately \$16,000. Vice Chair Frisby said that with regards to the grants received, the commission has raised \$90,000 in grants with pending applications of \$82,000 that the commission is waiting to hear what the results are. He said the MCAAHC is moving towards the goal but the commission still has a way to go.

## **Committee Reports**

### *Public Relations Committee-Commissioner Maya Davis*

Commissioner Maya Davis reported that the committee met on Monday, October 28, 2019. Those that were in attendance were Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Anthony Spencer, Commissioner Elinor Thompson, and Commissioner Marilyn Hatza. The discussion at this meeting was focused around the role of the Public Relations Committee (PR Committee). Commissioner Davis said that the committee is to highlight the programs and events of the BDM and the MCAAHC as well as to highlight different African American events of different African Americans across the State of Maryland. She shared that things like the Kwanzaa and Juneteenth programs would be spotlighted and placed on the commission's website as well.

Commissioner Davis said that the committee is currently working with Robert James, Marketing Director and Communication's Specialist to get information online such as the commission's minutes, agendas as well as the commission's annual reports that the Maryland Historic Trust has on their website to be copied and transferred to the MCAAHC's website. She shared that this information will help the public understand the kind of projects the African American Heritage Preservation Grant funds through the commission. Beyond this, Director James is working with the committee in securing a landing page to secure any photos of events the commission or museum has had to share with the public.

In addition to this, Commissioner Davis said that the PR Committee has been working with the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation (BDMF) and the Friends of the Banneker-Douglass Museum (FBDM) in showing support and engagement with the stakeholders. Commissioner Elinor Thompson attended the October 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, Commissioner Davis attending the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, Commissioner Anthony Spencer will be attending the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, and Commissioner Hatza will be attending the January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Commissioner Davis admonished that the MCAAHC Commissioners all become members of the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation where this not only shows support but also helps to defray costs of the programs and events of the BDM. She said that it costs \$25 to be a member and hopes that the public will join in support as well. Commissioner Davis said that if anyone has any questions about joining the BDMF, please speak with her after the meeting.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson asked that the PR Committee include LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant into their meetings and share any minutes or supporting documents the committee will have. She also shared that the committee make sure that all committee meetings be posted on the MCAAHC website so that the commission is compliant with the open meetings act.

### *BDM Committee-Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson and Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene*

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, Vice Chair of the BDM Committee reported for the committee. She shared that the BDM Committee has spoken to Ms. Sabriyah Hassan, BDM Program Director to have a commission led program at the BDM in the fall of 2020.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson shared that Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson gave her his report on the Loudon Cemetery program on Veteran's Day. She shared that this was the MCAAHC's first annual event

that was a very nice affair. Flags were laid on 1,102 U.S. Colored Troops that were interred there. All of their names were called aloud. There were representatives from the ROTC, military officials, Omega Psi Phi and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson said that there was close to 50 people in attendance to pay respect to these individuals. This program will take place next year and Commissioner Johnson looks to have more participation from the commissioners for this celebration.

*Nomination's Committee – Chair Steven X. Lee* Commissioner Steven X. Lee from the Nomination's Committee took a moment and thanked all of the seniors that came to support the MCAAHC meeting. He shared that if it weren't for them, the MCAAHC and various institutions would not be around today.

Commissioner Lee said that he was sorry that he was not able to make the October MCAAHC Public meeting where for the first time in Baltimore County the Lou Fields African American Awards program took place where he and many great others were recipients of this award.

Commissioner Lee said that he and Commissioner Janice Curtis Green are working on establishing a site to host one of the MCAAHC public meetings. He said that he has adopted Ellicott City along with Baltimore County as part of his jurisdiction because he shared that there is a significant part of African American History that crosses the river in Ellicott City.

Commissioner Lee shared that he has had tremendous support on the Nomination's Committee with team members: Commissioner Cheryl McLeod, Commissioner Maya Davis and Commissioner Reggie Turner. The committee has developed and presented criteria for engaging candidates to be considered to join the MCAAHC. Commissioner Lee said that the MCAAHC has great commissioners but all counties in the State of Maryland have not been represented on the commission.

Commissioner Lee said that committee has three candidates that the Nomination's Committee would like to have the approval of the public and the MCAAHC to look at and have their names to be taken and given to Governor Hogan for consideration as commissioners.

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson asked Commissioner Lee that once this process has been established that he reach out to Commissioner Maya Davis to make sure that the candidates be placed on the MCAAHC website where the commissioners and public can choose to nominate these individuals.

*Historic Preservation Committee – Commissioner Iris Leigh Barnes* Commissioner Iris Leigh Barnes came to the MCAAHC meeting gave a report that the Historic Preservation Committee will be calling a meeting for the month of December 2019 or early January 2020.

Commissioner Barnes said that she has been very active as an MCAAHC Commissioner with the Truth and Reconciliation Maryland Lynching Memorial Conference. This is the second conference for this group that will take place at Morgan State University on Saturday, November 16, 2019. She shared that the conference continues to grow and that Harford County, of which she represents, has a great report of the lynching's that took place there. Commissioner Barnes said that the group will shift its focus in the year 2020 towards the commemorations to voting where they will share how the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment gave black women and men the right to vote. She also said that there will also be

a recognition of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. The Maryland Lynching Memorial group will look at how these amendments and acts affected the State of Maryland.

### **Individual Commissioner Reports**

*Commissioner Reggie Turner* invited the MCAAHC and the public to come to the Washington County Free Library on December 9, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in Hagerstown, Maryland to hear Commissioner Lynn Bowman give an author's talk on her book, "Ten Weeks on Jonathan Street, The Legacy of 19th Century African American Hagerstown, Maryland." It is free to attend this affair.

*Commissioner Barba Paca*-Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson recognized Commissioner Paca as the MCAAHC's newest commissioner. Commissioner Barbara Paca greeted the public and shared how it was an honor to be able to serve on the MCAAHC and to work with the Program's Committee. She said that she looks forward to assisting the commission in any way that she can.

*Commissioner Melvin Kelly* shared that he represented the MCAAHC by attending the "Day of Remembrance" program at the Historic Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County. Commissioner Kelly said that Commissioner Anthony Spencer spoke at this program and did an exceptional job. He said that beyond this he has learned how to use Drop Box for his digital camera photos for the MCAAHC and Director Compton.

*Commissioner Anthony Spencer* reported that he went to Memphis, Tennessee with Theodore Mack, Chairman Emeritus of the MCAAHC and his wife Mrs. Betty Mack where they visited the National Civil Rights Museum. He said that it was very heavy seeing some of the graphic scenes that he could not finish touring the museum because the time period of the events was the year he was raised in.

While there in Memphis, Tennessee he shared that he also attended the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Freedom Awards banquet where many notables in music and history were recognized. From his trip, he gained a wealth of information in seeing how he can continue to spotlight the Northern Anne Arundel County Preservation Society history on a national level. He asked the public to consider going to the Civil Rights Museum to get an account of the struggle, progress, and the continued movement that we are making in this country.

Commissioner Spencer finished his report that he represented the MCAAHC on November 1, 2019 as a Paul bearer for the Henry Price funeral that took place at Asbury United Methodist Church on West Street in Annapolis, Maryland. He said that Mr. Price was the first pastor of the Asbury United Methodist Church. His remains from the Smith Price graveyard were forgotten and Mr. Price was respectfully and properly laid in peace.

Commissioner Spencer reported that he worked with LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant in getting transportation from Anne Arundel County Parks and Recreation Executive Director Mr. Archie Trader. Director Trader was able to provide a stipend for free transportation for the seniors who attended the gala affair.

*Commissioner McLeod* invited the public and the commission to come to the annual Kwanzaa affair that will take place on Saturday, December 14, 2019 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Banneker Douglass Museum.

Culture Queen will be the featured guest artist that will be main event at this celebration. This event is free for all to attend.

*Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene* gave a report that she and Commissioner Edwin Johnson are looking to work with the BDM staff to have a commission program at the museum. Commissioner Greene also said that she was impressed with the BDM staff getting the black U.S. Naval Academy Midshipmen to volunteer to be hosts and escorts at the gala affair.

*Commissioner Marilyn Hatza* said that it was a pleasure to be back in Howard County, a place where she lived from the mid-nineties until 2004. She said spent a decade working with Ms. Wilene Berger at the Howard County Center of African American History & Culture. Commissioner Hatza said that she represented the MCAAHC by attending the Maryland Historical Trust representing the committee for the African American Heritage program. The committee makes the recommendations and MHT then official gives their approval. Forty-five applications were submitted and 12 were given financial assistance.

*Commissioner Elinor Thompson* said that it was her pleasure to be at the great historic Harriet Tubman Jr.-Sr. School as well as be in this great historic community. She shared that she documents a lot of the African American History around Anne Arundel County. Commissioner Thompson said that she has been working with the Banneker-Douglass Museum where she has been enjoying their meetings. Beyond this she has been working with the Brewer's Hill Cemetery where they have a number of individuals that have been lynched interred at their historic cemetery. On February 15, 2020 Commissioner Thompson will be speaking at the Anne Arundel County Library presenting information on the Brewer's Hill Cemetery and other cemetery sites.

### **New Business**

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson turned the floor over to Director Chanel Compton.

*Director Compton* gave a report on the Maryland Heritage Area was calling on recommendations to serve as grant reviewers for the 2020 Heritage Grant applicants. This is a publicly funded program that provides financial support to the Heritage Area of education across the State of Maryland. This organization is looking for MCAAHC Commissioners to be grant reviewers. It was shared that it is a significant ask where a commissioner will be asked to spend 50 hours of dedicated time to this process.

### **Public Presentations**

*Ms. Bessie Bordenave, Chair Harriet Tubman Foundation* thanked the MCAAHC and the public for coming to their meeting. Ms. Bordenave asked for the MCAAHC and the public to support them in their endeavors of the spotlighting the slave ports in Howard County. She said that "History of Blacks in Howard County, Maryland," a book was written by Mr. Silas Craft is a bible for the Harriet Tubman Foundation of which they get detailed history about blacks from Howard County. In doing research, along with the books guidance, the foundation has been able to see the various which rich families and governors that had enslaved Africans as well as recognize the many slave quarters in Howard County. Their goal is to share this information to share the injustices of what took place as well as share the contributions African Americans have made in Howard County.



*Mr. Shawn Gladden, Executive Director of the Howard County Historical Society (HCHS), came to the MCAAHC public meeting to give awareness of the historical society and what it represents to Howard County. He shared that he has been the executive director for seven years where his goal is to transform the Howard County Historical Society into a repository that tells all of Howard County's history.*

Director Gladden felt that the HCHS history was a little one sided where he saw that there was not enough information being shared about African American, Jewish, and Asian history. He felt something must be done about this. To bring about this change, he has involved himself into some of the community organizations like the Harriet Tubman Foundation committee and the HCHS where he will be curating exhibits on these various races. In addition to this, he has been working with a small group on a Howard County historical project that focuses on the history throughout Ellicott City and Howard County.

*Ms. Lela Sewell-Williams, Archives Affairs Program Manager came to the MCAAHC public meeting to **shared** she is the program manager of the Columbia Archives. Her mission is to continue to collect, document, and to preserve the early history development of Columbia, Maryland. A signature program called "Let's Talk: An International Day of Drumming and Healing" took place on June 19, 2019 at the Miller Library. This program was created to spotlight the 400 year rich history of the enslavement of Africans in the State of Maryland. Drums were used to play an essential role in the sacred, healing and celebratory occasions of the African peoples, and represent connectivity among all peoples of the world. This program was produced where drumming and powerful speakers came to bring forth education, healing, awareness, about enslaved people and their descendant's history in Howard County.*

Chair Rev. Dr. England Wilson thanked the public for attending the MCAAHC Public meeting at the Harriet Tubman Jr.-Sr. High School. She also wished the public a very happy holiday and a very Merry Christmas. Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion to adjourn the public meeting to go into closed session. Vice Chair Frisby seconded and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant