

Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 4, 2022

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

The meeting was called to order at 11:02 a.m. by Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson.

Proof of Public Notice

Accepted by general consensus.

Welcome - Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson gave room for Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby to give the official welcome. Vice Chair Frisby addressed the public, thanked them for coming and shared that the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture has many great initiatives that are taking place. He also thanked the public, the commission and various elected officials for their continued support.

Approval of the Minutes - Chair Wilson

Chair Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the February 7, 2022 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) Public Teleconferencing meeting. Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair's Report-Chair Wilson

Chair Wilson shared that the MCAAHC has been working diligently on three initiatives. They are House Bill 1048 "Senator Verde Welcome Act" sponsored by Delegate Shaneka Henson, House Bill 1088 "Sponsored by the Honorable Speaker of the House Madame Adrienne Jones" increasing the African American Heritage Preservation Grant from \$1 million to \$5 million capital budget request as well as the \$3 million capital budget request of which all three has been accepted. All bills will go to Governor Larry Hogan's desk to be signed. Chair Wilson thanked the public for their continued prayer and support.

Chair Wilson publicly thanked the Honorable Kweisi Mfume for his leadership and direction in helping to craft these bills to be representative for today's needs as well as for the future.

Director's Report -*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton greeted everyone and took the time to recognize the MCAAHC Commissioners; Maryland Humanities; Mr. Winston Wilkinson, Chief of Staff for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives as well as the public.

Director Compton took a moment and recognized the Banneker-Douglass Museum's (BDM) new staff person: Ms. Jan Lee who is the new Director of Marketing and Communications for the BDM & the MCAAHC.

She gave her report on the activities for the months of February and March 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 123 subscribers which is a 21% increase from the previous month.

- BDM's website visitation was: 1,087 followers.
 - February's onsite visitation was: 1,132 visitors.
 - Facebook: 1,947 likes; 2,359 followers.
 - Instagram: 1,670 followers. This is a 1% percent increase from the following month.
- **Benjamin Banneker-Andrew Ellicott Mural Unveiling.**
 - During Black History Month on Saturday, February 5, 2022, the BDM unveiled this mural to the public as a hybrid affair.
 - The mural was painted by Mr. Arthur Smith, Artist.
 - Commissioner Steven X. Lee advocated for this mural to be housed and displayed at the BDM.
- **David Hayes Art Workshop**
 - On Saturday, February 12, 2022 the BDM presented an artist workshop from 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
 - This was a youth program that taught African American Quilt making and African American Abstraction.
- **Reparations Now Program**
 - On Thursday, February 18, 2022 the BDM hosted a virtual program where Dr. Funkule gave a presentation where thoughts were shared of what reparations means to the public today in the State of Maryland.
- **Kitchen House, Big House: "An Intimate Dialogue of the Struggle Between Black Women and White Women."**
 - This program was given on Friday, March 4, 2022 from 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
 - Dr. Karsonya Wise, Associate Professor of African American Studies gave the presentation for that evening sharing the difficulties that black and white women experience during the 19th century in the United States.
- **Harriet Tubman Bicentennial and Maryland Day Celebration**
 - On Saturday, March 26, 2022, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. the MCAAHC, the BDM as well as the State of Maryland recognized and honored Harriet Tubman 200th birthday celebration.
 - Contestants submitted videos about the life and legacy of Harriet Tubman.
 - ASL interpreters were present.
 - A winner was chosen for their great video honoring Harriet Tubman receiving a prize.
- **Upcoming Events**
 - **The 1619 Project Youth Project A Public Reading with Annapolis High School.**
 - On Saturday, April 23, 2022, from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. the BDM has collaborated in a partnership project with Baltimore Read Aloud to provide a reading program with Annapolis High School.
 - ☒ Books were provided by Ms. Nicole Johnson, CEO of Baltimore Read Aloud.
 - **Bowie State University and the Black Vote Mural Project Discussion.**
 - On Thursday, April 28, 2022, from 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. this program will take place online where artists and curators of this acclaimed exhibit gather to discuss this project around the BDM.

- **Collection's Department**
 - The Collection's Department under the direction of Ms. Schillica Howard has catalogued:
 - ☐ 118 items
 - ☐ 28 works from the fine arts collection that BDM owned for decades that hadn't been cataloged or accessioned.
 - ☐ Processed the Delores Hunt collection as well as the Ida Mae Mundell Collection.
- **Upcoming Exhibitions**
 - HONOR: "A Cultural Change" will be available to the public from April 12th-June 27, 2022.
 - "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.

Finance Committee Report-Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby

Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby reported that it is wonderful to see what is taking place with the State of Maryland Legislature, the MCAAHC as well as the BDM with legislative support. While this is great news, he shared that there isn't any museum in the State of Maryland that solely depends government to supply all of its needs. He admonished the public and the commissioners to continue to move forward by supporting the museum's fund raising needs.

The goal for the commission is to raise \$200,000. Vice Chair Frisby shared that:

- *Everyone did a great job in raising funds in FY21.*
- *Things are going well in FY22. To date, \$117,000 has been raised thus far.*
- *\$120,000 has been raised and there is \$80,000 to raise by June 30th.*
 - *A spring appealing has been established.*
 - *Perspective donors have been invited for upcoming events.*
 - *Behind the scenes tours are also being given.*
 - *A grant request of \$60,000 has been submitted to the Anne Arundel County Executive's office for approval.*
 - *Additional grant requests are being submitted to the Anne Arundel County Arts Council, Annapolis Rotary Club, Anne Arundel Arts and Resource Group.*
 - ☐ *Chair Wilson thanked Vice Chair Frisby, the public, the commission as well as the Development Committee for all of their hard work.*

Public Relations Committee-Commissioner Maya Davis, Chair

Commissioner Maya Davis shared that the Public Relations Committee (PR) met on March 17, 2022.

- The members present for this meeting were: Commissioner Lopez Matthews, Elinor Thompson, Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh, and Commissioner Maya Davis.
- Commissioner Davis shared that the following items were spotlighted this meeting:
 - Public Committee meetings
 - BDM and The MCAAHC website merger.
 - The Pendulum newsletter.
- **Public Committee Meetings.**

- o A discussion was had by the PR Committee on how they can provide more exposure to the public about participating in these virtual meetings.
- **BDM and The MCAAHC Website Merger**-Commissioner Davis has been excited, along with the committee, to work with Executive Director Compton, Ms. Jan Lee and the 1953 website design firm.
 - o Commissioner Elinor Thompson is working on getting a list of past MCAAHC Commissioners to be added as content to the commission's website.
- **The Pendulum** is a digital newsletter of the MCAAHC that provides great information.
 - o The PR Committee has been working on providing content for the next newsletter issue.
 - The next newsletter will also spotlight "Black First" which includes: interviewing Ms. Adrienne Jones, Madame Speaker of the House Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh, First Black Female Mayor of the City of Cheverly, Maryland.
 - ❖ If anyone has some suggestions for the "Black First" please let the PR Committee know.
 - ❖ The Harriet Tubman Committee will be submitting content for all four issues.
 - ❖ Farewell Section: Commissioner Lopez Matthews will be spotlighted for the great work he has done with the MCAAHC during his tenure.
 - Commissioner Lopez Matthews has been appointed state archivist for Washington, DC.
 - ☒ 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.
 - The Pendulum Newsletter will receive editing assistance from two State of Maryland former employees: Ms. Cecilia Queen and Mrs. Green.
- o **The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (MLTRC):** Commissioner Davis shared that she serves as the liaison for the MCAAHC on this committee.
 - It has been asked from the Equal Justice Initiative Board that the MLTRC push back their public hearings later in June so that the MLTRC can have a greater impact in connecting with other communities that have been impacted by lynching's across the State of Maryland.
 - Also in March there was the first of four trainings that have taken place for members of the MLTRC, county coalitions as well as the public to learn how to be facilitators with individuals around the discussions of trauma.
 - Three individuals have joined the MLTRC. They are:
 - ☒ Aisha Braveboy, Prince George's County State's Attorney
 - ☒ Dr. Izetta Mobley, from the Reginald Lewis Museum
 - ☒ Teisha Dupree-Wilson from Coppin State University
 - o Commissioner Iris Barnes will be a part of this process.

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 is working on the 2022 Black Symposium Conference.

- October 27th or 28th will be the dates of the conference.
- The theme will be the Pursuit of Health, Healing, and Wholeness of the African American Community.
 - Ms. Sabriyah Hassan, BDM Programs Director, has been collaborating with many of the organizations and groups for this conference.
 - This conference will take place at Morgan State University where youth would get a firsthand and be inspired about receiving a college education at an HBCU.
 - ☒ Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson is the liaison between the Banneker-Douglass Museum and Morgan State.
 - Looking to organizations and schools to sponsor transportation for the youth to the programs that will be held during this affair.
 - Workshops and speakers are being decided.
 - ✓ She asked the Chair Wilson and the MCAAHC Commissioners if they could have a moment of silence at the public meeting since this was the day Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated.

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

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod gave a report that:

- She thanked everyone that watched the Harriet Tubman video on March 26, 2022.
 - Commissioner Adi Nkwonta who assisted her with the leadership initiatives
 - Commissioner Maya Davis for thoughts on the theme for this endeavor.
 - ASL interpreters Ms. Barbara Hunt and Ms. Brenda Warden were present.
 - Mr. Louis Fields received a Lifetime Achievement Award.
 - Video presentations were given by:
 - The Maryland School of the Deaf from the Columbia Academy with the help of Dr. Kelby.
 - Ms. Shawn Ashworth.
 - Yahmasha Bayton.
 - Nathaniel Alston.
 - Jimmy Reed
 - Alexander Reed
 - Xavier Reed
 - Commissioner Cheryl McLeod and her brother.
 - ☒ The Maryland School of the Deaf won the grand prize and received a visit from Harriet Tubman-Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene.
- Commissioner McLeod asked that the public to go to the MCAAHC's YouTube video that is a little over an hour and a half.

MCAAHC Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Reggie Turner reported that he has working on the initiative of preserving the Robert W. Johnson the MCAAHC AAHPG has supported the Robert W. Johnson Community Center & YMCA, on Jonathan Street, which was the first black school during reconstruction. The community advocated funding for this school.

- Senator Joann Benson attended this school.
- Governor Larry Hogan appropriated \$400,000 to this project.
- The State of Maryland legislature was able to provide \$100,000 towards this project as well.
 - Collectively over the past three years, they have been able to advocate \$1.3 million for this school.
 - An assessment has been done for this building with the support of Maryland Historical Trust.
 - A document is being done about the Jonathan Street Community giving an in-depth story about this history.
 - The video looks to be released in February 2023.

Commissioner Anthony Spencer reported that he was able to attend the Annapolis Historic new exhibit in downtown Annapolis, Maryland.

- He shared that this was first time in Annapolis and all around African American history that African Americans of Annapolis history was shared in this museum.
 - Commissioner Spencer shared to the MCAAHC as well as the public that he would like for all to have their youth to move their focus from STEM to STEAM.
 - He shared that arts are a critical part of learning for our youth.

Commissioner Dr. Barbara Paca reported that she and her constituents are working hard on the Eastern Shore.

- She shared that it was great to see Chair Wilson and others at the Harriet Tubman Celebration at the Black Water Museum.
- Commissioner Dr. Paca shared that Chairman Emeritus Theodore Mack was nominated and won the Calvert Award.
 - Chairman Mack is the first black person to receive this esteemed award for his lifetime of dedication to preservation.
 - This is an award that seldom handed out.
 - Governor Donald Schaefer and Senator Paul Sarbanes were recipients of this award.

Commissioner Elinor Thompson gave a report that she has been working with the Maryland Historical Trust, Executive Director Compton and the African American Cemetery of the State of Maryland.

- She shared that this particular project is for African American Cemetery's that also may have issues or problems at their locations.
- Commissioner Thompson said that if House Bill 1088 goes through, there should be funding to support the African American Cemeteries in the State of Maryland.
- There were 250 participants at the workshop for this endeavor and a survey was also given to submit information about these cemeteries.
 - For a copy of the survey as well as more information, one can go the MCAAHC website: <https://africanamerican.maryland.gov/>

Commissioner Steven X. Lee gave a report that on April 6, 2022 the Maryland Institute College of Art and the Baltimore Alliance will have a symposium on art and equity.

- He also shared that Coppin State University's, Coppin Academy, will be working with the Afro Newspaper in learning how to archive materials.

- o This group of high school students will receive hands on training that will help prepare them for college and assistance for the preservation field.
- o Commissioner Lee shared that he serves on the Maryland 250 Commission that this commission is moving along with an emphasis how to raise funds to leads towards the sesquicentennial in 2026.
 - The group has a concern on developing a curriculum on our country's American Revolutionary War.
 - He shared that it is important that information be shared regarding the many contributions African American soldiers made in the Revolutionary War beyond slavery. Thomas Carney is one of those individuals that has done this.
- Commissioner Lee said that he has been meeting with the Maryland Center for History & Culture-Historical Trust and the Maryland Historical Society.
 - o He was surprised to see a small portion of information that these institutions had at that time.
 - Commissioner Lee would like to see more information on the contributions of freed African Americans in our countries history.
 - He shared that African Americans of the State of Maryland must embrace this history as well.
 - Commissioner Lee said that while Confederate statues are being taken down across the State of Maryland, he is looking at being a great support of erecting African American Patriot statues across the State of Maryland.

Harriet Tubman Visitor Center, Ms. Deanna Mitchell, Superintendent of Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park

Superintendent Mitchell thanked Chair Wilson, the MCAAHC and the public for the opportunity to speak.

- She shared that she met Chair Wilson, Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene and other MCAAHC Commissioners at the Harriet Tubman Celebration.
- Superintendent Mitchell gave a PowerPoint Presentation called, "A Thread Runs Through Them" Harriet Tubman Natural Cultural Resources to the Eastern Shore.
 - o This presentation gave insight about the landscape of survival, to work as well as enslaved individuals to make it.
 - She shared that Araminta Ross "Harriet Tubman" lived a long life from 1822-1913.
 - Araminta changed her name to "Harriet" before escaping in honor of her mother.
 - Harriet emancipated herself in 1849 and returned 13 times to Dorchester County to free enslaved individuals.
 - She became an Underground Railroad Conductor and took on the spiritual name of "Moses" setting blacks free.

Accomplishments of Harriet Tubman

- She was a nurse, cook, and a spy during the Civil War.
- In Beaufort, South Carolina, during the Reconstruction Era, Harriet worked with others in having 700 blacks freed from the system of slavery.
- Harriet had the innate ability of navigating through waterways and natural landscapes.
 - o She also developed skills in timber harvesting, flax cultivating, and muskrat trapping.
 - o February 16, 2022, is when all major marketing pushes throughout the State of Maryland will take place for the many affairs.

Legacy of Harriet Tubman

- Because of her many great accomplishments and strides for freedom Superintendent Mitchell shared that:

- o Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park was dedicated in her name in Church Creek, Maryland.
 - Receives over 200,000 visitors per year.
- o Harriet Tubman National Historical Park was dedicated to her in Auburn, New York.

Superintendent Mitchell shared that she would like for the MCAAHC Commissioners as well as the public to please visit the Harriet Tubman Visitor Center that is open Tuesday-Sunday 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Before the meeting was adjourned, Chair Wilson took a moment of silence to recognize the death and assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968, at 6:05 p.m.

Chair Wilson then called for a motion to adjourn the MCAAHC Public Teleconferencing meeting. Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Anthony Spencer and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant