

Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture  
Public Meeting  
Minutes of August 5, 2019

A public meeting was held on Monday, August 5, 2019 at the College Park Airport, 1909 Corporal Frank Scott Drive, College Park, Maryland.

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. by Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson. The following commissioners were in attendance: Lynn Groesbeck Bowman, Maya Davis, Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby, Janice Curtis Greene, Melvin Kelly, Lopez Matthews, Cheryl McLeod, Anthony Spencer, and Elinor Thompson.

**Proof of Public Notice**

Accepted by general consensus.

**Welcome**

Commissioner Maya Davis opened the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) public meeting by welcoming the public on behalf of the commission. She thanked the public for the great responsiveness and attendance for this meeting. Commissioner Davis took the moment to recognize the various officials and representatives of elected officials that came to the public meeting. She also thanked the Prince George's County Historical Society, the African American Historical and Genealogical Society, the Maryland National Planning and Park Commission, the Maryland State Archives as well as the Maryland Office of Tourism.

Commissioner Davis thanked Mr. Omar Eaton-Martinez Assistant Division Chief, Historical Resources Natural and Historical Resources Division Department of Parks & Recreation, Prince Georges County Maryland-National Capital Parks & Planning Commission for providing the great meeting space at the College Park Airport Maritime Museum. She then introduced Mr. Omar Eaton-Martinez and turned the floor over to him.

Mr. Eaton-Martinez welcomed everyone to the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission that represents the Prince George's County Parks and Recreation. He shared that the significance of the MCAAHC meeting being held in the College Park Airport conference room is a major and larger part of the College Park Aviation Museum where the College Park Airport is the oldest running airport in the world. He thanked the MCAAHC and the public for coming to their facility and asked that all in attendance please visit this African American operating airport museum.

Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson thanked Commissioner Maya Davis for hosting the MCAAHC public meeting and finding this beautiful facility that everyone has enjoyed. She also said that this is also close to the University of Maryland campus where she received her degree. Chair England Wilson thanked the public for their great attendance in coming out to the MCAAHC's first meeting under the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the MCAAHC. She shared that the commission was founded June 29, 1969.

Chair England Wilson took a moment to recognize Mr. Steve McAdams, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives where she opened the floor for Mr. McAdams to address the commission and public. Executive Director McAdams took a moment to recognize Dale Green, recent former chair of the MCAAHC as well as Chair Lady Emeritus Lyndra (nee Pratt) Marshall who both were in attendance at this meeting. He congratulated Chair England Wilson on her appointment as chair where Executive Director McAdams said that he appreciated her leadership and that she has a partner in the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. He greeted the public and thanked everyone for coming to this meeting. Executive Director McAdams said that he was extremely impressed with all of the work that the commission and the public has done in preserving the great rich history of their communities and the State of Maryland abroad.

Executive Director McAdams, thanked Director Chanel Compton and her staff for the great work that they are doing at the Banneker-Douglass Museum, preserving Maryland's rich African American history. He said that the museum is doing great things and that he's looking forward to a tremendous year of success.

Executive Director McAdams, said that year 2019 celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MCAAHC. He said that Director Compton and her team has executed several incredible events across the State of Maryland such as the annual youth conference, a BDM symposium affair as well as the unveiling of Senator Verda Freeman Welcome exhibit. Executive Director

McAdams said that Maryland is proud to have the first African American Commission in the United States of America as well as Senator Verda Freeman Welcome, Maryland and the country's first African American female state senator.

Executive Director McAdams shared that recently the BDM received a national federal fund as one of fourteen recipients in the whole United States which has led to national attention. He shared that all of this was made possible due to the strong support of Governor Larry Hogan, Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, and the MCAAHC. Executive Director McAdams thanked everyone for their continue support of the commission, their communities as well as the great State of Maryland.

Chair England Wilson took a moment to also recognize Mr. Winston Wilkinson, Chief of Staff of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives where she gave him the floor to share words. Chief of Staff Wilkinson greeted everyone as well as thanked Mr. McAdams for a great speech. He shared that he went to Fairmont Heights High School in 1962. Chief of Staff Wilkinson said that at that time there were only two African American high schools in Prince George's County and one African American high school, the Wiley H. Bates High School, in Anne Arundel County. He said that he went to Morgan State University in 1966 where he has seen many changes in civil rights over the years. Chief of Staff Wilkinson commended the MCAAHC of 50 years of great leadership and said that we are all steadily rising.

Chief of Staff Wilkinson said that Governor Larry Hogan is from Prince George's County and is familiar with Maryland's African American history. After giving words, Chief of Staff Wilkinson presented a proclamation to Chair England Wilson, Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby, Director Chanel Compton, and the MCAAHC body.

Chair England Wilson took a moment to also recognize Chair Lady Emeritus Lyndra (neePratt) Marshall and recent former Chair Professor Dale Glenwood Green. She also took a moment to recognize Ms. Beryle Hall, President of the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation.

## **Welcome**

### **Minutes of June 3, 2019's Meeting**

Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the June 3, 2019's MCAAHC meeting. Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### **Director's Report**

Ms. Chanel Compton, the Director of the MCAAHC and the Banneker-Douglass Museum (BDM), began her report by recognizing: Dr. Synatra Smith from the Prince George's County African American Museum and Cultural Center; Ms. Sabriyah Hassan, BDM Program Director and Mr. LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant for the MCAAHC and the Administrative Manager for the BDM.

Director Compton shared that the BDM has had a great summer. She said that summer is a wonderful time to bring young people together. This mission was accomplished by the museum hosting its "We Rise Youth Conference" on Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup>. This conference was led by Mr. Rashaan Simms, Baltimore Youth Activist where he spoke on how youth can be agents of change. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Professor of Morgan State University, came and spoke representing the MCAAHC. Director Compton said that this conference was also totally produced and devised by the youth, for our youth of Maryland. The conference took place at the Banneker-Douglass Museum, 84 Franklin Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

Director Compton said that she attended History Day where this day displayed powerful, strong, intelligent, students who are becoming scholars of African American history and agents of change. She shared that one of the winners of the MCAAHC awards for this history contest was a young lady who devised a documentary on the Tuskegee Experiment.

On Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup> the MCAAHC had its "We Rise" 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Legacy Symposium that was held at Morgan State University, New Jenkins Hall, 1600 Havenwood Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21251. Director Compton said, The Honorable Mr. Kweisi Mfume, Head of the Board of Regents at Morgan State University was the key note speaker. Director Compton shared that there was a panelist discussion that included Professor Dale Green, former MCAAHC Chair; Dr. Evelyn Higginbotham, President for the Association for the Study and Life of African American History; and Ms. Adrienne Jones, Speaker of the House for the State of Maryland. This symposium focused on the significance, impact, and model of change sharing the 50 year rich history of the MCAAHC. Beyond this Ms. Mary Sue Welcome, Senator Verda Welcome's daughter,

spoke as well Dr. Benjamin Quarles, great grandson Mr. Kweli Zukeri and Delegate Julian Ivey, one of Maryland's youngest delegates spoke and received awards from the MCAAHC.

Director Compton said that the museum sits in the heart of downtown Annapolis, Maryland where it receives a diverse audience of individuals from all races that attend the programming there. Recently, the BDM hosted a "Well Red Black Girl" program that focuses on black female empowerment which is a part of the "Verda's Place" exhibition.

Director Compton shared that on July 1, 2019 the African American Heritage Preservation grant applications came to a close. She said that this is an annual grant where the MCAAHC partners with the Maryland Historical Trust in presenting presentations in various counties on the Maryland African American Heritage Preservation grant program. This grant program provides \$1 million a year towards capital grant heritage site projects throughout the State of Maryland. There are six grant workshops that will take place in the various counties of the State of Maryland. Those who apply for the grant can possibly receive up to \$100,000 for their project. Director Compton recognized Mr. Stewart Eisenberg, an AAHPG recipient that attended the meeting.

Director Compton said that the MCAAHC gave out two Maryland African American prizes for two students at History Day. There was one student who developed a great project on the Tuskegee Experiment as well as will be spotlighting her project at the Youth Conference at BDM on Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup>.

Director Compton shared that the BDM was awarded the IMLS grant of \$50,000 where the museum was one of fourteen recipients of this national award. She said that this grant will help to compliment the various items and art work that is in the collections department. In closing, Director Compton encouraged the public to visit the Banneker-Douglass Museum, Maryland's Official Repository of African American History & Culture. Director Compton said that the BDM is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. where it is free for the public to visit.

#### *MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

Chair England Wilson shared with the public that she and the MCAAHC have been very busy since she was sworn in 35 days ago preparing for: this public meeting, initiatives with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commission as well as making a tremendous impact across the State of Maryland. She said that a few weeks ago the MCAAHC had a retreat entitled, "If You Want to Go Fast Go Alone but If You Want to Go Far, Go Together." She shared that the commission worked on their vision statement, committees mission statements as well as a strategic plan that will be presented in a couple of months. Chair England Wilson said that the grant committee will begin its work in the very near future where the grant applications closed on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The committee will receive and review these grant applications in August.

Chair England Wilson said that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary initiatives of the commission are in full effect where one can see the listing of the programs and events that are taking place. She stressed that everyone come together and join the MCAAHC in celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary "We Rise" Gala on Saturday, November 2, 2019 from 6:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. Chair England Wilson is the chair over the gala where she and the MCAAHC are excited that this affair will be held at the Banneker-Douglass Museum where the museum will be totally transformed that night with music, entertainment and lots of food. She took a moment to address the MCAAHC Commissioners where she is asking them to sell tickets for this extravaganza. Chair England Wilson said that she is taking the first ten tickets. She said that there are 90 tickets left and those tickets can be divided up where 100 tickets can be sold for this affair.

#### *MCAAHC Vice Chair Herbert Frisby*

Vice Chair Herbert Frisby began his report sharing that he will be focusing on the sponsorship levels of the gala, the MCAAHC's revenues to date and a report from the Administration and Finance Committee. He said that there are five levels one can contribute to. Vice Chair Frisby said that each level authors different inducements and benefits. The first level, Stewart level, provides an opportunity for a person to receive a gala ticket and person's or company's name will be placed in the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation (BDMF) Annual Report. The second level is a \$500 level provides two tickets for the gala, a large screen acknowledgement at the gala, a person's or company's name to be placed in the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation (BDMF) Annual Report as well as person or company's name to be placed in the gala program. The third level, trail blazer category, is a \$1,000 level provides three tickets for the gala, a large screen acknowledgement at the gala, a person's or company's name to be placed in the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation (BDMF) Annual Report as well as person or company's name to be placed in the gala program. The fourth level, scholar level, provides a BDM-

BDMF press release announcing their contribution, a large screen acknowledgement at the gala, a person's or company's name to be placed in the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation (BDMF) Annual Report as well as person or company's name to be placed in the gala program. Vice Chair Frisby said that the fifth level, a \$5,000 level provides an opportunity for the person or company's name to be placed on donor's row, a BDM press release, a private table, on screen acknowledgement, a person's or company's name to be placed in the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation (BDMF) Annual Report as well as a person or company's name to be placed in the gala program.

Vice Chair Frisby admonished everyone at the meeting to be donor and sponsor for this great endeavor. He said that we have a way to go but with everyone's help, this truly makes a significant difference. To date, he shared that the MCAAHC is at 15% of its sponsorship goal.

Vice Chair Frisby said that the Administration and Finance Committee has been very busy since the commission's retreat. The committee is following up on items discussed at this retreat especially such as finalizing a draft with the BDMF which would direct how the funds would be handled and distributed for the gala. The goal would be that this committee present a draft of the letter to the BDMF and report back to the MCAAHC for its final approval at the next MCAAHC public meeting.

Vice Chair Frisby said that the Administration and Finance Committee is working on their mission statement and will have a draft to present at the next MCAAHC public meeting too.

## **Report of Commissioners**

### *Commissioner Lopez Matthews*

Commissioner Lopez Matthews began his report by sharing that he received an endowment of \$140,000 for Howard University. He said that he is starting a digitization project at Howard University for the digital collection of architects. Commissioner Matthews asked that the public keep their eyes open for this collection in the near future.

### *Commissioner Lynn Bowman*

Commissioner Lynn Bowman began her report by thanking Director Chanel Compton and Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene for their support in coming up to Hagerstown, Maryland to a city council meeting to help with the struggle of saving the Jonathan Street Community. She shared that this is probably the biggest initiative that they currently have in Western Maryland. The Jonathan Street Community is in Washington County where it is under extreme attack where Commissioner Turner is doing wonderful there. Commissioner Bowman admonish the commission and public to support him with this endeavor.

Commissioner Bowman shared that she does an extensive amount of work in Garrett County where they have asked her to help find and save their African American Heritage. She is thankful and grateful for this opportunity. Additionally, she has been working on the Brownsville Monument project where they is grant money available between the foundation and the grant. While all of the proper paper work has been filled out carefully, there seems to be a hold up in moving forward by the administration. Commissioner Bowman said that if anyone has any contacts with Frostburg State University Administration to please give them a little nudge as to why they are taking so long to move forward. The rock has been ordered, the contractors are in place, and everyone else is in place ready to move forward.

Commissioner Bowman shared that in Alleghany County, they are getting to have their Emanuel Episcopal Emancipation Ceremony which happens to be the same weekend as the MCAAHC gala. At the Episcopal Emancipation Ceremony there will be a reenactment of enslaved people making it to the tunnels of the Emmanuel Episcopal Church. Alleghany college students, Frostburg State University students and various high schools will be involved. She said that it is a wonderful event where all are welcome to attend.

### *Commissioner Elinor Thompson*

Commissioner Elinor Thompson shared that she represents Southern Anne Arundel County. She said that she has been working on the Maryland Lynching project in documenting the individuals that were hung in Annapolis, Maryland. Commissioner Thompson said that she had the pleasure of working with Janice Hayes Williams. She said that she attended a ceremony at the Historic Asbury United Methodist Church in Annapolis, Maryland that was founded by Smith Price in 1803.

Commissioner Thompson said that she looks forward to working with the MCAAHC as they preserve African American history.

Chair England Wilson took a moment and recognized Mr. Will Schwartz, President of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project.

*Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene*

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene began her report by sharing that she is an MCAAHC Commissioner that represents Baltimore County. She shared that she performed as Senator Verda Freeman Welcome in June at the MCAAHC Symposium at Morgan State University. As a member of the BDM Committee, Commissioner Greene said that she is working with the BDM in establishing a partnership collaboration of the performing arts at the museum and the State of Maryland. The first group that she shared this proposal to was the Griot Circle of Maryland founded by Mary Carter Smith. She has commissioned Ms. Sabriyah Hassan to schedule the Griot Circle of Maryland at the various Harrambe Storytelling events at BDM.

In rounding off her report Commissioner Greene said that she has been doing her research in studying African American Women that have changed the landscape of Maryland. She convened a meeting in Calvert County in July where she worked with researchers on studying the former caretaker of Harriet Elizabeth Brown. Commissioner Greene thanked Commissioner Maya Davis and former Commissioner Michael Kent for all of their help with the research on this great leader. Commissioner Greene then passed a copy of a scrapbook she devised and presented it to Director Chanel Compton for the BDM archives. She said that this is also her committee report intertwined with her personal report. Commissioner Greene said that her committee is going to meet one more time before they present their action items to be presented to the MCAAHC for approval.

*Commissioner Tony Spencer*

Commissioner Tony Spencer began his report by sharing that he is an MCAAHC Commissioner from Anne Arundel County. He said that on July 1<sup>st</sup> he attended the African American Voices Trail program sponsored by 4 Rivers Heritage Foundation. The project was well attended by those who went to Carr's and Sparrow's Beaches 40 years ago. He said that this vision was laid out as in sharing what Carr's and Sparrow's beaches not only meant to Annapolis but what it meant to those who traveled up and down the East Coast as well. He said that this information is now online.

Commissioner Spencer said that he served in the name of the MCAAHC as a Paul Bearer at the Historic Asbury United Methodist Church on West Street in Annapolis, Maryland for Price Smith. He said that it was a very historical moment.

Commissioner Spencer said that he has been working with the Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal church in Pasadena, Maryland where they are working on the first phase of restoring this Rosenwald School. They received their first \$100,000 and are looking to secure more funding for the extension of this project.

*Commissioner Cheryl McLeod*

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod gave her report by sharing that she is a commissioner from Howard County and that she came to the MCAAHC to give an overview of the work that she has been doing with Commissioner Steven X. Lee with the Nomination's Committee. She shared that if the MCAAHC were to look at the overall scope of MCAAHC Commissioners, they still don't have full convenance. The Nomination's committee took a look at criteria as well as developed some insight on how the committee can help assist the Governor's efforts in finding people that meet the needs of the African American story and insight. Commissioner McLeod said that in looking at things, regionally speaking, that the committee wants to make sure that they have the full diversity of the State of Maryland. She said that there are a lot of counties on the Eastern Shore that lack representation. She said that the Nominations Committee wants to make sure that they reach out to all of our counties and regions that we know people. The Nominations Committee wants to bring together the best suggestions in facilitating this process in the governor determining who is the best candidate for the MCAAHC. An action plan and time line is being put together to be submitted to the MCAAHC by 2020.

Commissioner McLeod said that she is 99.9% sure that the MCAAHC will be hosting its December public meeting at the Harriett Tubman School in Howard County. One will get more information as they finalize this process.

#### *Commissioner Melvin Kelly*

Commissioner Kelly gave his report by saying he is the senior MCAAHC Commissioner as well as is a commissioner of Anne Arundel County. He said that he grew up in Howard County where he was asked to be a part of a video that traced the Underground Railroad in Howard County. He shared that this video hopefully will be up on YouTube in the next few weeks. Commissioner Kelly said that one will find a segment, in the video, where there was a cave where those who were enslaved traveled and hid there. He said that as a young child he played and explored in that cave. He said that because of this experience he has an interview with the Baltimore Sun.

Commissioner Kelly finished his report by sharing that he is also one of the unofficial photographers of the MCAAHC.

#### *Commissioner Maya Davis*

Commissioner Maya Davis began her report by sharing that she is one of the MCAAHC Commissioners from Prince George's County. She said that she has two significant projects she is connected to. The first project is the Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass statues that are being coming to the Maryland State House. This will be the first African American statuary in February 2020.

Commissioner Davis said that she has been connected to the Middle Passage Ceremony and Port Marker's project. She is proud to say that through the partnership of County Executive Stuart Pittman and the Mayor of Annapolis, Gavin Buckley, we have received a UNESCO designation in Annapolis, Maryland.

Commissioner Davis said that the David Driskell Center will be hosting the MCAAHC after this public meeting.

#### **New Business**

Commissioner Maya Davis shared that the Loudon Park Cemetery is a part of the Baltimore National Park Cemetery complex in Baltimore, Maryland. It holds over 1,000 U.S. Colored Troops in its cemetery from the Civil War. The Maryland State Archives in partnership with Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, has transcribed and digitized the burial cards for each of the 1,000 colored troop soldiers. With the support of the MCAAHC, Commissioner Davis and Commissioner Johnson would like to have a program that would bring different organizations out like the Boys and Girl scouts, and the public school system to put out U.S. Colored Troop flags or the American Flags on Veteran's Day and host this program at Loudon Park.

Commissioner Maya Davis asked if a motion could be made on behalf of Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson to have the Veteran's Loudon Park Cemetery Project officially recognized as an annual commission project. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene and was unanimously made by all MCAAHC Commissioners.

#### **Presentations**

*Dr. Dennis Doster, Black History Program Manager Historical Resources Natural and Historical Resources Division Department of Parks & Recreation, Prince George's County Maryland-National Capital Parks & Planning Commission*

Dr. Dennis Doster, Black History Program Manager Historical Resources Natural and Historical Resources Division Department of Parks & Recreation, Prince George's County Maryland-National Capital Parks & Planning Commission came on behalf of the Maryland National Capital Parks & Planning Commission Black History Month program. This program was established in 1982. He said that this organization is the oldest of its kind celebrating black history since 1982 where the group began out of a survey project. In the 1970's there was a community push that blacks as minority come to the majority and share rich contributions of African American History from Prince George's County. This organization likes to think of themselves as a museum beyond walls.

*Dr. Synatra Smith, Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center*

Dr. Synatra Smith, Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center is the Curator of Education who came to the MCAAHC meeting to share one of the cultural center's new initiative called the "Community Treasure Chest." She shared that this initiative was an opportunity for the PGAAMCC to take their collections out into the community as well as create a community pop up museums where individuals can bring their items to add to what they have. They received an IMLS grant where they have a huge team working with them to continue this program to move forward.

*Mr. Stuart Eisenberg, Grant recipient, Hyattsville Community Development Corporation*

Mr. Stuart Eisenberg, Grant recipient, and Executive Director of the Hyattsville Community Development Corporation came to the MCAAHC meeting where he shared that they are a corporation that focuses on community revitalization and

redevelopment. He came to the meeting sharing an original plan that was developed as part of programming outgrowth of a revitalization project. Mr. Eisenberg thanked the MCAAHC for their leadership and support.

*Heather Erst, Partnership and Outreach Manager, Maryland Office of Tourism Development*

Heather Erst, Partnership and Outreach Manager, Maryland Office of Tourism Development came to the MCAAHC public meeting to speak on how they are working with the MCAAHC on a collaborative effort spotlighting the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman.

Ms. Erst shared that this is a special time, in history, where the State of Maryland and others are looking at the 150th anniversary of Tubman's self-liberation. She shared that the Maryland Office of Tourism will work with the MCAAHC to curate the programming for this signature moment. There will also be a press release sharing the great contribution of Harriet Tubman, the State of Maryland's daughter and leader of Maryland's African American History. Beyond this, there will be an opening of a Harriet Tubman Biopic where a Harriet Tubman movie coming out November 1, 2019. Ms. Erst shared that the Maryland Office of Tourism will be working with the MCAAHC in providing events from the MCAAHC and the BDM to the tourism's Network to Freedom website.

Chair England Wilson, called for a motion to adjourn the MCAAHC meeting. There was a unanimous motion and a unanimous second for the meeting. The public meeting was adjourned at 2:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant