

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

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 6, 2021

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Iris Leigh Barnes, Maya Davis, Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby, Janice Curtis Greene, Marilyn Hatza, Edwin T. Johnson, Melvin Kelly, Steven X. Lee, Lopez Matthews, Adi Nkwonta, Cheryl McLeod, Honorable Kayce Munyeneh, Anthony Spencer, Torrey Snow, 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 and Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby welcomed the public as well as recognized Mr. Winston Wilkinson, Chief of Staff, for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives for attending this meeting. Chair Wilson thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners for all of their hard work in finalizing materials as well as writing letters to their respective senators and delegates for their strong case of support articulating the MCAAHC's needs from year 2022 Legislative General Assembly.

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

Chair Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the October 4, 2021 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) Public Teleconferencing meeting. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Vice Chair Frisby seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### **Director's Report**

*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton greeted everyone and gave her report that consisted of the following highlights of the Banneker-Douglass Museum for 2021.

- **Capital Improvement for interior and exterior of building**-Director Compton shared how the museum was initially the Mt. Moriah African Methodist Episcopal Church that was established in 1874. The church was established by free blacks and is 147 years old. A mighty group of leaders such as Verde Welcome, Dr. Carroll Greene, Dr. Benjamin Quarles, the Maryland Commission on Negro History and Culture with the public saved the church from being torn down and turned into a parking garage.
  - In 2017, some light repairs were made to façade outer perimeter where the chimney and gutters were fixed and replaced because things were falling apart and some things were ready to fall off.
  - Additional repairs are needed to the front of the façade of the church where the pitch above the green Victorian doors has shifted due to an earthquake that took place eight years ago.
  - **State of the Art Collection's Department**-Major renovations took place to the collection's department where new state of the art shelving, movable art racks and collection storage carts were added to preserve the many artifacts the BDM houses.
    - This process was able to take place through the Museum Sciences and Library Grant.

- **BDM's HVAC System**-The museum's HVAC system is over 20 years old and has had some repairs done to it due to leakage of oil and solenoid valves that became unsealed as well as all fans that cool the system stopped working. The system has provided tremendous service but needs to be replaced with a state of the art HVAC system.
  - **Restoration of the flooring in the Mt. Moriah Church**-This historic wing, the church, received funding to begin the restoration of the flooring back to its natural wood.
    - New lighting, WiFi installation as well as replacement of old electrical lines in the historic wing are tentative to take place.
    - Partial funding has come from private donors and the public. The State of Maryland Government has been petitioned to provide the additional funding for the repairs to be completely made.
  - **Banneker Mural Restoration Project**-A mural of Benjamin Banneker and Andrew Ellicott was given to the BDM by the Maryland Department of Transportation.
    - The mural unveiling will take place on Saturday, February 5, 2022 from 2 p.m.-4 p.m. This will be a hybrid program.
- **We Rise Opening Reception**-From March 2020 to September 2021 the BDM was closed due to the pandemic. On Friday, September 17, 2021 a private donor's reception took place at the BDM to say thank you as well as recognized the various donors for their giving. \$100,000 was raised at this affair.
  - **BDM Block Party**-On Saturday, September 18, 2021 this great affair ushered in the public to let them know that the Banneker-Douglass Museum was open for business.
    - African American vendors, dignitaries and bands came on this great celebratory day.
    - At this party, several community leaders were honored for their great contributions, gifts, talent and work given to make a difference in the City of Annapolis, Anne Arundel County as well as the State of Maryland.
  - **Freedom Bound, Run Always of the Chesapeake Exhibit**-This exhibit was unveiled at the grand opening block party on Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup> where the exhibit is open for all to enjoy.
    - A virtual component is available for those that would like to see the exhibit and enjoy the engagement of this exhibit.
  - **Black Vote Mural project**-Executive Director Compton thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners for all of their support in making this exhibit be a tremendous success!
    - The commissioners helped in finding homes for the murals.
      - Twelve of the murals were given away to community centers, schools as well museums concerning capturing the history of the black vote in our country.
  - **Curator of Collections**-Chair Rev. Dr. Wilson worked with Executive Director Compton in securing a personal identification number that opened the door for Ms. Schillica Howard to be able to secure a permanent position as the curator of collections with the Banneker-Douglass Museum.

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

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene took a moment to thank Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Frisby, Executive Director Compton and the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation for their leadership over the MCAAHC and the BDM.

- 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.

She reported that the BDM Committee was charged in producing its third annual Black Symposium Conference.

- The MCAAHC’s program would focus on ASALH’s theme, “The Spirit of the Black Family, Reclaim, Renew and Remember.”
  - Due to the effect of Covid-19 pandemic, it was suggested that the conference be produced as a three day affair.
  - The first day featured a virtual Anti-Racism training brought to the public by the Anti-Racism Coalition under the direction of Ms. Sabriyah Hassan, Program Director of the Banneker-Douglass Museum.
  - The second group then went into a hybrid event where they focused on: “Rejoicing.”
    - Event Stream Team, a family-owned media company, provided services for this program to engage the virtual and live audience through a seamless process with music and dancing.
    - Executive Director Compton spoke on: “The Power of African American Museums.”
  - On the third day, Commissioner Cheryl McLeod led a hybrid program on educational lessons that focused on health and education.
    - Under the suggestion of Director Hassan, the BDM Program Committee decided that for the year 2023 that the:
      - Three day program be scaled down to one.
      - BDM Youth Conference be incorporated in that day.
      - Have an intergenerational session for the youth, young adults and adults to collectively enjoy together.
        - ☐ This will allow the MCAAHC and the BDM to combine their financial resources to have their program at the historic Morgan State University.
        - ☐ These programs have reached over 50,000 individuals at the BDM.

*African American Heritage Preservation Grant Committee Report Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Chair*

Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Chair of the Program’s Committee reported the great successes of the African American Heritage Preservation Grant Committee (AAHPG) in overseeing the 10<sup>th</sup> year of this grant.

- Commissioner Johnson shared the top five jurisdictions that received the grant for this year.
  - 1) Baltimore City received 13.83% percent of the awards.
  - 2) Montgomery County received 9.28% of the awards.
  - 3) Talbot County received 8.78% of the awards.
  - 4) Baltimore County 8.51% received of the awards.
  - 5) Dorchester County received 8.49% of the awards.
- There are three new jurisdictions that the committee was looking to receive applicants from. They are:
  - 1) Garrett County which successfully applied for this award.
  - 2) Howard County that looked to apply for this award.
  - 3) Worcester County that looked to apply for this award.
- Overall \$10,233,000 has been awarded since the AAHPG was established 10 years ago.
- This year the request for grant funding has succeeded the amount of money the AAHPG has to offer.
  - There were 36 eligible applications that translated into \$3.3 million requests.
  - The AAHPG was able to recommend 13 projects instead of the tradition 10 projects because some of the projects only asked for partial funding. These successful counties are:
    - 2 from Anne Arundel

- 2 from Baltimore City
- 2 from Harford County
- 1 from Caroline County
- 1 from Worcester County
- 1 from Charles County
- 1 from Garrett County
- 1 from Prince George's County
- 1 from Montgomery County
- 1 from Talbot County

☐ On December 9<sup>th</sup>, the AAHPG Committee is prepared to go before Baltimore City Council on sharing their great response to this grant.

*Public Relations Committee-Commissioner Maya Davis, Chair*

Commissioner Maya Davis shared that the Public Relations Committee (PR) have been on several initiatives where they publish the MCAAHC's digital newsletter, "The Pendulum", manages the MCAAHC's website but also promotes advocacy between the MCAAHC and the BDM for audience engagement.

- The members of this group are: Commissioner Barbara Paca, Commissioner Elinor Thompson, Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh, Commissioner Iris Leigh Barnes, Commissioner Lopez Matthew, Commissioner Torrey Snow, Commissioner Anthony Spencer and Commissioner Maya Davis.
- Commissioner Davis took the time to spotlight:
  - The Pendulum Newsletter and the MCAAHC website.
- **The Pendulum** is a digital newsletter of the MCAAHC that provides great information such as a:
  - Welcome message from Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara E. Wilson.
  - An arts corner section from Executive Director Chanel Compton and the BDM.
  - Article submissions are given from various sites from across the State of Maryland.
  - Historic Sotterly was spotlighted as one of the recipients of the AAHPG.
  - Recently the newsletter recognized celebrations and commemorations of the Maryland Humanities Council thanks to Commissioner Marilyn Hatza as well as a submission from PG Parks Black History program celebrating 15 years of providing Juneteenth Celebration programming.
  - There were some unique challenges that took place in 2021 with article submissions. The Black Family theme will be carried over from 2021 as well as the 2022 ASALH theme of Black health and wellness into the next edition.
    - There will be an additional section called, "Black First" presented by Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh celebrating things blacks have started in the State of Maryland.
    - The newsletter will close out highlighting the AAHPG program showing some of the people that have been positively impacted by this award.
  - Commissioner Davis shared that this would also be a great opportunity to spotlight the great work that Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Chair Rev. Dr. Wilson and Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby to advocate for the MCAAHC in acquiring more funding for the AAHPG.
    - The Pendulum newsletter is available on the MCAAHC's website where there is an area that one can submit information for articles that they would like to have spotlighted in the newsletter
  - **The MCAAHC website:** Commissioner Davis shared information on the MCAAHC website stating that the website has several tabs that one can navigate through. They are:
    - MCAAHC Commissioners bios have been submitted where Commissioner Torrey Snow will be lending a helping hand to work with Word Press.
    - An Activities page for MCAAHC committee descriptions has been updated.

- An Agendas & Minutes landing page has been added where they are looking to add agendas from 2017 to 2021.
- Newsletters will continue to be available for the public to look at the past editions from the 1980s moving forward.
  - ▣ Ms. Schillica Howard will be working with the PR Committee in providing the past editions.

*MHAA Racial Equities Group Report, Commissioner Steve X. Lee*

Commissioner Steven X. Lee shared that he has the pleasure of serving on this committee with Executive Director Chanel Compton.

- After a year's course of researching and looking how to address racial equity situations, the MHAA Racial Equities Group has selected an organization that they feel meets the needs in serving in leadership for this area for the State of Maryland.
  - Symphonic Strategies, Inc. is the organization that was selected for this program.
  - This organization has reaffirmed Commissioner Lee's confidence in making sure that the mission of racial equity is established for all in the State of Maryland.
  - Chair Rev. Dr. Wilson shared that the MCAAHC sent letters to send for the charge of those who shared that they were supposed to continue to carry out this charge where these individuals be held accountable.

*Maryland 250 Quincentennial Committee Report member, Commissioner Steven X. Lee*

Commissioner Steven X. Lee gave some information letting the MCAAHC and the public know that the group has had two meetings since the MCAAHC's October public meeting.

- The United State will be celebrating it semicentquicentennial where the State of Maryland and the United States have established commissions for this celebration.
  - Commissioner Lee serves on the education committee where he will be recognizing all African American soldiers especially those that served on the American Revolutionary War.
  - He said that it is challenging to move this forward because many African Americans and other either don't know or may not want to share how much we've served in this country.
  - Commissioner Lee is looking to have one African American Patriot be recognized for their contribution to our country.
  - Commissioner Lee wants to carry on the mighty work, charge and legacy of Dr. Benjamin Quarles.

*African American Cemetary Project Report, Commissioner Elinor Thompson, President*

Commissioner Elinor Thompson, shared that she, Executive Director Compton, the Maryland Historical Trust, the Legislative General Assembly and the MCAAHC have been working on a great project in protecting and studying the needs Maryland Historical Burial Sites for the public.

- This work has been collaborated with the Maryland Coalition to Maryland Burial sites.
  - On November 18, 2021, a survey was created and there were 102 respondents.
  - Of the 102 respondents 63 wanted to continue to receive updates about this mission.
  - Information was placed on the BDM and the Maryland Coalition to Protect Maryland burial websites.
    - This information was also shared with the 63 interested parties as well.
  - The survey listed the needs of various burial sites that needed research, preservation, documentation and support of free and enslaved individuals.
  - Seven individuals have reached out to Commissioner Thompson that said that some of their churches do not have documentation of their history and solicit help.

- o One can have access for this application by either obtaining it via website or downloading the form and sending it in the mail.

*Harriett Tubman Celebration Committee Report, Co-Chair Commissioner Cheryl McLeod*

In the month of March, Chair Wilson and Executive Director Compton were both approached by Mr. Lou Fields regarding the MCAAHC taking ownership of the Harriet Tubman Celebration initiative. A subcommittee has been started and housed under BDM's Program Committee.

- Commissioner Cheryl McLeod, shared that she and Commissioner Adi Nkwonta are the Co-Chairs of the Harriet Tubman Celebration Committee.
- Commissioner McLeod reported that on March 10, 2020 is the Bicentennial of Harriet Tubman.
  - o The State of Maryland and many other areas has officially proclaimed March 10 as Harriet Tubman's Bicentennial Celebration.
  - o She anticipates that there will be numerous activities for this celebration where the MCAAHC will spearhead and help to lead the charge over all of the celebrations in every county in the month of March honoring Harriet Tubman.
  - o Commissioner McLeod shared that if the MCAAHC Commissioners or public know of any celebrations to please share it with the committee.
  - o Commissioner Janice Greene is an official member of this committee.
  - o The committee is looking for at least three more members to join this committee as they continue to spotlight Harriet Tubman.
  - o The committee had a meeting with Executive Director Compton where the group shared information that Mr. Lou Fields had from the previous celebrations he has been a part of.
    - The Harriet Tubman Celebration Committee is looking to take the information that was successful from the past and expand on it for 2022 and beyond.
  - o The committee will doing outreach with the Harriet Tubman Family, tourism, the BDM and the BDM for a greater acknowledgement and engagement of Harriet Tubman.
  - o Tentatively, December 14, 2021 is the next meeting scheduled for the group to convene.
    - A timeline of events will be proposed for this meeting.

*Finance Committee Report, Chair-Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby along with Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Vice Chair Frisby and Executive Director Compton reported on the following items:

- o The Financial Committee has been meeting diligently with their consultant in identifying key donors for the next quarter.
  - \$100,000 has been raised thus far with another \$100,000 request to be made.
  - Customized letters have been produced for the existing donors and prospective donors.
  - Additional financial goals for the MCAAHC and the BDM will take place during the legislative session at the Maryland General Assembly.
  - One can donate by going to the BDM's website where a link can be found at: <https://bdmuseum.maryland.gov/donate/>
  -

*New Business, Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara Wilson*

Chair Wilson shared that after hearing the reports, the MCAAHC is petitioning the State of Maryland Legislatures of this year's Maryland General Assembly to:

- 1) Increase the MCAAHC's budget from \$660,000 to \$1.6 million dollars.

2) Increase the AAHPG from \$1 million dollars to \$5 million dollars.

3) Provided \$3 million dollars to the Banneker-Douglass Museum's critical capital needs.

- Chair Wilson is asking each MCAAHC Commissioner to support the leadership's decision to advocate for one bill to advocate for all of the museum's needs.
  - On December 9, 2021 Chair Wilson, Executive Director Compton and Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson are soliciting the support of the Baltimore delegation.
    - A meeting is planned for the Annapolis delegation to ask for additional support as well.
    - Commissioners: Steven X. Lee, Kweisi Mfume have petitioned Madam Speaker of the House, Adrienne Jones as part of their advocacy as city and county representatives.
- Chair Wilson is asking each one of the MCAAHC Commissioners to ask Madam Speaker of the House Adrienne Jones; the Honorable Bill Ferguson, President of the Senate; and Delegate Maggie McIntosh, Chair of the Appropriations Committee to directly support the initiative for this bill to take place.
  - Chair Wilson shared that the MCAAHC is addressing the needs of the African American community.
  - Done extensive research on all matters to engage this bill.
  - The MCAAHC has raised tremendous money as the State of Maryland Official Museum of African American History and Culture.

#### *Adjournment*

Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Tony Spencer, and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant