

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

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 1, 2021

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, Kayce Munyeneh, Adi Nkwonta, Cheryl McLeod, Barbara Paca, Anthony Spencer, Elinor Thompson, and Tamara E. Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 11:01 a.m. by Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson.

### **Proof of Public Notice**

Accepted by general consensus.

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

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

Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the December 7, 2020 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) meeting. Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair Wilson began the MCAAHC Public Teleconferencing meeting by welcoming the public and wishing them a "Happy Black History Month." She thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners as well as the Banneker-Douglass Museum (BDM) staff for their continued work supporting Maryland's African American History & Culture.

Chair Wilson gave room for Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby to greet the public.

Vice Chair Frisby said that he thought about a quote of:

- *"We ain't what we want to be. We ain't what we use to be. Thank God we ain't what we was."* from Dr Martin Luther King, Jr.
- He felt that this was not only apropos on the first day of Black History Month but where the MCAAHC is now.
- Vice Chair Frisby said that the MCAAHC, the BDM Staff, and the Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation are eager, very energetic, and that all entities has received tremendous support from the public and the Hogan Administration.

### **Officer Reports**

*MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

- Chair Wilson reported that the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture Handbook:
  - It contains the commission's bylaws, policies, and procedures that was slated to be available for the MCAAHC Commissioners to review and vote on at this meeting.
  - The Executive Leadership of the MCAAHC is still reviewing the booklet and is looking to have it for the commissioners in the month March for approval and voting at the April 12, 2021 MCAAHC Public Teleconferencing meeting.
- Chair Wilson said that the commission is represented on the Reginald F. Lewis Museum (RFLM) board.
  - Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Herbert Frisby have been sworn in and Commissioner Lopez Matthews serves on the board as well.
  - These leaders will share reports of what is taking place at the RFLM in future commission meetings.

- Chair Wilson represents the commission on the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority's Racial Authority Group along with Commissioner Steven X. Lee.
  - This group was established from a letter that was produced, by the MCAAHC, challenging Maryland Heritage Authority's Area concerning the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in funding.
  - Collectively Chair Wilson and Commissioner Lee are working to develop a plan of action on furthering MHAA funding practices.
- In honor of Black History Month, Chair Wilson represented the MCAAHC by participating in a video with Governor Larry Hogan on February 1, 2021.
- Chair Wilson also shared that she and Commissioner Maya Davis represent the MCAAHC by serving on the Logistics' Committee for the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (MLRTC).
  - Commissioner Maya Davis is the chair of this committee.
- Chair Wilson said that she is working with Executive Director Dr. David Funkale on a joint statement between the two commissions.
  - The commissions voted to accept the statement and are now working on phase two.
- Chair Wilson gave room for Mr. Robert James, Director of Marketing and Communications of the Banneker-Douglass Museum to present information on a plan for the commissions.
  - Director James shared that he is working on an aggressive marketing campaign spotlighting both commission's work regarding the Anti-Racism initiative messaging that will be prepared and will encompass coverage to be given from the local and national syndicate media.

## **Director's Report**

*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton reported the following year 2020 highlights for the BDM & the MCAAHC:

- COVID-19 and Black Lives Matters have tremendously affected the State of Maryland and the world. Both presented aspects of historic oppression to the people of color especially African Americans.
- Museums are no longer considered neutral spaces but promote civil rights, social change, as well as has now become places of community health awareness.
- Companies are now beginning to integrate the message of racial equality to their mission statements as well their company's objectives.
- Director Compton gave some of the priorities last year for the BDM & the MCAAHC.
  - Build partnerships- A joint partnership has been formulated with many community organizations and businesses throughout the State of Maryland.
    - Ms. Martha Davis, Ms. Margaret Blaxwell, and Ms. Sonya Swygert have been significant volunteers that have helped to expand the goals and vision of the BDM. The year 2020 presented the most collaborations between the MCAAHC, the BDM Staff with the public.
  - Due to the symposium with the Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts called, "The Art of Activism" several African American Artists shared their talent by painting Black Lives Matter banners.
    - A banner will be installed outside of the BDM for the public to see the results of this gathering.
  - Devise virtual programming- Because of this resource, the BDM was able to garner an all-time high of 55,504 of visitor engagement to the museum's visitation.
    - BDM's programming has gone from 1,500 individuals to 4,500 individuals.

- Planning- Due to COVID-19, the BDM staff was able to write more grants, meet with new groups as well as establish grander collaborative programming.
- The MCAAHC's initiatives has engaged 1 million Marylanders to COVID-19 responses of safety measures from the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives.
- The BDM has a new state of the art collection's room that comfortably and properly houses all of the artifacts that the museum has cataloged. This room was established in 1984 and now meets the industry standards to make things more personable and professional for public usage and research.
- Last year the BDM followed the Association for the Study of Life and African American History's theme on "The Black Vote." In moving forward with this charge the BDM had:
  - 18 mural artists that focused on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> amendments celebrating 150 years of Black men having the right to vote and 100 years of having women having the right to vote.
  - Nine youth and community events took place during this course of this program.
  - Mural afterschool training workshops were established.
  - Anti-Racism teacher training was made available for the public to partake in.
- The BDM plans to reopen in August of 2021. While the museum cannot be open at this time, a virtual tour component is being reviewed and considered to be placed on the museum's website.

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

Vice Chair Frisby gave a presentation reporting the following information in acquiring grants:

- The MCAAHC and the BDM raised approximately \$63,000 towards the 2021 goal.
- The BDM Staff along with volunteers: Ms. Sonya Swygert, Ms. Monica Davis, and Ms. Margaret Blaxall have significantly contributed to assisting the museum's and commission's plans in putting together a funding campaign.
- A campaign will kick off in off August 2021 and end at the end of the year.
- He thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners for supporting the Commission's 51 years of excellence campaign where they gave \$51 towards this collaborative effort.
- Vice Chair Frisby said that this plan will continue on into the end of 2021.
- Monies can be sent by going to the BDM's website under the Banneker-Douglass Museum's Foundation where one can donate.

*Public Relations Committee-Commissioner Maya Davis, Chair*

Commissioner Maya Davis gave the following report from the Public Relations Committee.

- The committee is made up of members: Commissioner Maya Davis, Commissioner Iris Leigh Barnes, Commissioner Elinor Thompson, Commissioner Dr. Barbara Paca, Commissioner Tony Spencer, and Commissioner Lopez Matthews.
  - The group had two meetings that were held on November 12, 2020 and January 28, 2021. The committee's focused on three areas of concentration; they are:
    - 1) The committee meetings-the group agreed that they would meet monthly on the fourth Thursday of that month at 2:00 p.m.
    - 2) The MCAAHC's website-the group agreed that MCAAHC minutes, agendas, MCAAHC public meeting dates, committee meeting dates, the Pendulum newsletter, BDM's programs as well as press coverage for the joint MCAAHC and the MLTRC commissions.
      - Chair Wilson and the MCAAHC Commissioners agreed that Commissioner Davis and the PR Committee move forward with their charge in enhancing the MCAAHC's website.

### *COVID-19 Ad Committee-Commissioner Janice Curtis Green Chair*

- The committee is made up of members: Chair Janice Curtis Greene, Vice Chair Commissioner Torrey Snow, Media Outreach Coordinator Commissioner Adi Nkwonta, Commissioner Elinor Thompson, and the BDM Staff.
- It was established after the MCAAHC Commissioners and BDM Staff heard the powerful presentation of Dr. Sherita Golden, Chief Executive Director of Diversity and Inclusion for John Hopkin's regarding alleviating fears as well as the misinformation and about African Americans and the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The purpose of the committee is to:
  - Disseminate COVID-19 information to the various communities under the commissioner's jurisdictions.
  - Ensure that the MCAAHC Commissioners are using one voice sharing the current information.
  - Be educated on the various practices made available for the public.
  - Share the availability of vaccines by different pharmaceutical companies.
  - Promoting and supporting the initiatives of Governor Larry Hogan concerning COVID-19 and how it affects the people of color, the overall community, and the State of Maryland at large.
- The COVID-19 Committee had their first meeting via a Zoom session on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 where they planned for a listening session in partnership with the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC).
  - Vice Chair Torrey Snow offered an opportunity for Chair Greene to share information on the listening session with UMMC that would take place on Friday, February 5, 2020 from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
  - Announcement emails and invites were sent by Special Assistant LeRonn Herbert to all of the MCAAHC Commissioners to share with their local churches, communities, organizations, family, and friends regarding this affair.
  - Outreach Coordinator Adi Nkwonta shared and asked that the flier be sent out for another rotation to all of our constituents by Mr. Herbert.
  - Director Robert James was tasked with placing the information on the BDM and MCAAHC websites.
  - Commissioner Thompson was asked to develop a spreadsheet of contacts supplied by the MCAAHC Commissioners for future endeavors.
  - Chair Wilson supplied 75 contacts for this program.

### *Individual MCAAHC Commissioner Reports*

- Commissioner Dr. Barbara Paca shared two items of business for the Eastern Shore:
  - 1) On February 1, 2021 from 6:00 p.m.-6:15 p.m. she, along with the Water's Edge Museum located in Oxford, Maryland, will be hosting a virtual exhibition opening featuring guest speakers: First Lady Yumi Hogan, Lt. Boyd K. Rutherford, Comptroller Peter Franchot as well as the Founding Black Families of America. This exhibit shows how black people lived on the Eastern Shore as well as how their life matters. This exhibit also empowers young people to find their place in history as well as to share their unique voices in facing contemporary issues and challenges.
  - On February 13, 2021 Salisbury University's Department of theatre, music, and dance will be presenting a program called, "Songs of Courage, Freedom and Justice." This program will consist of performances by the Rite Studio Quartet and Salisbury University's Asbury Methodist Church with Dr. Wesley Wright. This is in celebration of African American History and Culture and in the spirit of diversity and inclusion. Tickets are available through ShowHistory.com.
- Commissioner Maya Davis shared information that the MCAAHC and the Maryland State Archives will be receiving a partnership award from the Maryland Heritage Authorities Area on the installation of the Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass statues that were placed in the Maryland State House. has been meeting with the Prince George's County Schools and invited Mr. Herbert to meet with the CEO of the Prince George's County Schools in reference to renaming various schools in Prince George's County.

- Commissioner Steven X. Lee shared that there is a request for proposal for a facilitator manager's position on racial equity at the Maryland Heritage Area Authorities. One can apply for this position from Wednesday, January 13, 2021 to Tuesday, February 16, 2021. A survey was sent out in December 2020 to all art and culture organizations especially African American organizations. To date the MHAA has received 30% of those surveys. He admonished the commissioners and public to please answer the survey if it was sent to them.
- Commissioner Cheryl McLeod shared that she will submitting a document in writing regarding the great Kwanzaa program that the MCAAHC and BDM collectively had together.
- Commissioner Marilyn Hatza shared that Maryland Humanities runs a Maryland History Day program, a year-long history research by students on things that are important historically.
  - She encouraged the MCAAHC Commissioners to put the date of May 1<sup>st</sup> on their calendars as well as implored the commissioners to be a Maryland History Day judge.
- Commissioner Anthony Spencer said that his tenure with the MCAAHC has been renewed.
  - He also gave information that the Anne Arundel County Arts Council has taxi voucher to individuals and seniors in the Anne Arundel County that need support to doctors' appointments and other needs to maneuver around the county. This voucher is designed to show support to individuals in Anne Arundel County that has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Commissioner Spencer said that Claudette Copeland has been forgotten about as being a 15 year old powerful civil rights leader who was the first African American young lady, from Maryland, that refused to give up her seat on a bus for a white person to sit down. Since she was pregnant at that time her powerful stance was not recognize. Commissioner Spencer shared that Ms. Copeland should be recognized alongside Ms. Rosa Parks and that the MCAAHC should take a stance to capture and preserve this history.
- Commissioner Elinor Thompson admonished the MCAAHC Commissioners and public to go on "The Capital" website to substantial article coverage on a cemetery that she found in Lothian, Maryland from 1832. Several Civil War soldiers were interred at this site where "The Capital" didn't have detailed information provided regarding these heroes Commissioner Thompson was able to capture. She is trying to work on getting this information on the national treasury as well as with the Maryland Historical Trust.

Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Melvin Kelly, and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant