

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

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 7, 2021

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

The meeting was called to order at 11:16 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 April 12, 2021 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) meeting. Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Melvin Kelly seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair Wilson turned the MCAAHC Public Teleconferencing meeting over to Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby who welcomed the public and the commission to its second bi-monthly meeting. Vice Chair Frisby seconded the thoughts of Chair Wilson that he so looks forward to seeing the lovely faces of the MCAAHC Commissioners and the public soon.

### **Officer Reports**

*MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

Chair Wilson reported on the joint statement of the MCAAHC and the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Committee (MLTRC) has produced on injustice and social inequity. She shared that:

- She is proud of the work that both commissions have contributed to address the issues continues to be a problem to the community of color.
- A statement has been posted on the Banneker-Douglass Museum's (BDM) and the MLTRC's website for the public at large to see.
- It is both commission's collective goal to strive for change on the injustices and social inequities that need to change in the State of Maryland.
- On June 18, 2021, at 11 a.m. before Juneteenth, both commissions will lead a press conference, at the BDM, on what actions the commissions and the public choose to take.
- All social distancing policies will be enacted where everyone will be required to wear a mask.
- A follow up plan of action will take place after the joint statement of the commission's press conference.

Chair Wilson reported that she and Vice Chair Frisby have been appointed to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum's (RFLM) Board of Directors. She said that she has been charged with leading the governance committee where she will be

working with former MCAAHC chair, Professor Dale Green in this capacity to build a stronger relationship between the BDM and the RFLM.

Chair Wilson gave room for Commissioner Steven X. Lee to make his report on the Maryland Heritage Authorities Area that he serves on.

Commissioner Lee shared that the MHAA has been looking into having a facilitator to make sure that there is fairness in how the grant funding opportunities are distributed to all people from various backgrounds. He said that:

- Eighteen individuals from various organizations, from across the country, have responded to this announcement.
- Nine individuals have been selected as candidates to be interviewed.
- Five percent of African American businesses received grant opportunities over the past few years.
- The MHAA is one of the largest funding institutions in the State of Maryland.
- Commissioner Lee was very appreciative of the support and work of Governor Larry Hogan and his administration moving forward with great changes in cultural equity.

## **Director's Report**

*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton reported the following information for the BDM & the MCAAHC:

- She first recognized the mighty staff of the Banneker-Douglass Museum.
- A little over \$60,000 was raised by private donors, the public as well as the MCAAHC that gave towards the MCAAHC 2020-2021 Anti-Racism Campaign.
- Director Compton thanked the University of Maryland Medical Center for donating thousands of N-95 face masks to the BDM.
- BDM onboarded a financial company called, "A. Wheeler Consultants." Ms. Angela Wheeler, principal consultant will be working with the BDM Foundation, Friends of the BDM, as well as the BDM staff to improve capacity, programming, and exhibitions.
- On April 20, 2021, the MCAAHC and the BDM launched, "The Foundations of Racism" that looks at "Defining the Roots of Bigotry and Discrimination against Black People in America."
  - There were 189 participants for this training with a video and reading guides on the BDM's website.
  - Sponsors for this program are the 4 Rivers Heritage Area, Anne Arundel County Arts Council, and the Foundation's Anti-Racism campaign.
- Six media outlets covered the MLTRC and the MCAAHC Joint Statement, Anti-Racism Initiatives as well as talks of the BDM Reopening.
- BDM will be partnering with RFLM in sharing their "Freedom Bound Runaways of the Chesapeake" exhibit with an exhibition opening in September.
- In following the theme of the Association for the Study and Life of African American Life & History (ASALH), the MCAAHC and the BDM had a virtual program on "The Future of the Black Family" which took place on February 16, 2021 with special guest speaker Matt Prestbury, Founder of the Black Father Foundation. This program addressed the needs, concerns, and struggles of blended families, intersectionality as well as black men leading in diverse times like these.
- The BDM partnered with Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts called, "The Art of Activism" where several African American Artists shared their talent by painting Black Lives Matter banners.
  - Executive Director Chanel Compton and Commissioner Tony Spencer were guest speakers at this affair.

- A banner will also be installed outside of the BDM for the public to see the results of this gathering.
- Due to the success of the Anti-Racism coalition, BDM produced and presented its 2021 Anti-Racism Coalition. The group consisted of many great powerful leaders that are from the State of Maryland. The MCAAHC's own Commissioner Davis is one of its leading members.
- On February 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> the BDM hosted a Harambee Program with the Anne Arundel County Library system.
  - The program was called, "Black Representation Matters" which explored the many great black authors and books that should be a part of our family learning time.
- The BDM garnered 42,837 individuals that listened or join programs, virtual events, or discussion for the BDM Media/Marketing Reach in the month of February.
- Women's History Month kicked off with a powerful program sponsored by the MCAAHC, BDM, and the Eastern Shore Network for Change that centered on the powerful social justice leader Ms. Gloria Richardson.
  - A timeline of the historical facts of Ms. Richardson and the Freedom Fighters were shared, discussions were had, and Ms. Richardson's family was there to represent her in her absence.
  - For Women's History Month, the BDM garnered 11, 117 individuals to its programs and events.
- BDM is currently seeking interns for their paid internship appointments. Executive Director Compton shared that many students cannot afford to intern without pay today at museums.
  - Director Robert James is interviewing candidates to be considered for this program.
  - This program is designed to give young adults access to museum administration and marketing endeavors especially people of color in leadership roles.
- The BDM, under the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, plans to reopen in September of 2021.
  - While preparing for this transition, a new cleaning contract budget is being established.
  - PPE is being sought after by donations from the public and corporate sponsors.
  - BDM HVAC repairs are being enacted with approval from Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford.
- The Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation, Inc. (BDMF) received a \$75,000 grant due to a bond bill application that the foundation applied for.
  - A special thank you was given to Senator Sarah Elfreth, Delegate Dana Jones, and Delegate Shaneka Henson for their execution, consideration, and support with this process.
- Executive Director Compton is working with A. Wheeler Consulting Group on the rebranding of the BDM, the BDMF and the Friends of the Banneker-Douglass Museum's its fundraising initiatives.
- The African American Heritage Preservation Grant presentations have already begun starting in the month of April.
  - Deadlines for application submission is Thursday, July 1, 2021.
- Finally Executive Director Compton thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners for their planning, fostering new partnerships, as well as coalitions and advocacy for racial equity.

## Financial Committee Report

*Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby*

Vice Chair Frisby began his report in seconding Executive Director Compton by sharing that The Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation, Inc. (BDMF) received a \$75,000 grant due to a bond bill application that the foundation applied for.

He shared that:

- The budget is very stable.
- MCAAHC has obtained A. Wheeler Consultant for all entities related to the MCAAHC and the BDM.
  - A meeting was had with A. Wheeler Consultant on May 28, 2021.
    - Executive Director Compton, Commissioner Adi Nkwonta, Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, volunteers Margaret Blaxall, Margaret Davis, and Sonya Swygert were present with Vice Chair Frisby.
    - A substantive discussion took place about the MCAAHC and BDM's goals, programming, structure, and follow up objectives.
- To date the MCAAHC has raised \$70,398 in funds pledged or raised.
  - The remaining balance to be procured is \$9,602.00.
- Personal appeal letters are to be sent to larger contributors and organizations.
  - All MCAAHC Commissioners to reach out to family members, neighbors, and constituents for financial donation assistance.
- Talks have been in the works with the Chesapeake Conservancy in donation and preservation endeavors.

Chair Wilson shared that there had been a discussion with the Executive Leadership of the MCAAHC to make a financial donation ask for the BDM.

- Vice Chair Frisby shared that he would give room to Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, Co-chair regarding this endeavor.
- Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene made a plea to all MCAAHC Commissioners to close the \$9,000 gap to reach the \$80,000 for year 2021.
- Commissioner Tony Spencer, Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, Chair Wilson, Vice Frisby, The Honorable Commissioner Kweisi Mfume, Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Commissioner Elinor Thompson, and Executive Director Compton made pledges to close this gap.
  - Chair Wilson open the floor that the public can also participate in this opportunity.

*Public Relations Committee-Commissioner Maya Davis, Chair*

Commissioner Maya Davis shared information that the Public Relations Committee has been working diligently on the MCAAHC's website, promoting the MCAAHC through the website, as well as share the MCAAHC's, "The Pendulum" newsletter as an e-blast.

- The Pendulum newsletter will be focusing on Spring-Summer activities such as:
  - Juneteenth Ceremonies
  - Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson-Morgan State University Graduation Celebration during the pandemic.
  - Dennis Dobsters and the Juneteenth Celebration at Watkin's Park.
    - Commissioner Reggie Turner has been spotlighted and featured on the work that he has done in Washington County.

- Commissioner Bios are being worked on to be more concise and consistent for the website.
  - Half of the MCAAHC Commissioner body has sent there's in.
  - Commissioner Davis Googled some of the MCAAHC Commissioners and has placed them in.
  - A plea was asked for many MCAAHC Commissioners to please submit their bios to help with this process.

The PR Committee is looking to add an "About Us" current and past MCAAHC meetings, reappointment terms, agendas, minutes and that each chair of each committee provide a summary of what services that their committees provide.

Commissioner Davis gave the following report from Maryland Lynching and Truth Reconciliation Committee MLTRC) Logistics Committee.

- The Logistics Committee is gearing up for the public hearings that will take place in various counties across the state where lynching situations has been documented.
  - 1) The first hearing will take place in Alleghany County in September.
  - 2) Commissioners Cheryl McLeod and Elinor Thompson have been regular attendees at the MLTRC Logistics where they represented the MCAAHC and share their thoughts on matters.
  - 3) A table will be placed at the hearings that will showcase materials from the BDM and the MCAAHC, other African American institution affiliates as well as logistical materials to find certain rooms for those who will be participating in the hearings and various personal needs.

Commissioner Davis shared that the MCAAHC has received an Emmit Till Award where the MLTRC can hire individuals to assist the commission.

- A genealogist, an historic researcher, and a public coordinator to coordinate the public hearings and arrangement between the commission and the various county coalition groups.
- These contractual positions will be posted at the end of June by the Attorney General's Office as well as on the Maryland.gov job app.

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

Commissioner Janice Curtis Green shared that she and Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson are the co-chairs.

- 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 group collectively met to continue the work and progress on the MCAAHC-BDM Symposium initiatives.

**Opening - Sunday, October 10, 2021, 4:00 PM-5:30 PM - Rejoice**

- The theme selected for this symposium is: "The Spirit of the Black Family: Rejoice, Renew, Remember, and Reclaim."
- This program is called, "Rejoice" where this will be a celebration and a simulcast hybrid event.
- Musical selections will be render from gospel choirs from across the State of Maryland.
  - Commissioner Dr. Paca will have gospel choirs singing from the Eastern Shore.
  - Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson will be at Morgan State University presenting the Morgan State Gospel Choir for this program.
  - The Honorable Kweisi Mfume also is being asked to be the keynote speaker for this program.

**Educational/Informational Component - Wednesday, October 13, 2021, 6:00 PM-7:30 PM – “Renew”**

- This program will be a virtual event that will have four incredible speakers that will address the issues that African Americans have faced from the COVID-19 pandemic. Issues addressed will be:
  - Financial Competency for the African American Community
  - Continuing Health concerns in the African American Solutions to bring students and technology up to date.
  - Post-COVID Mental Health Effects of COVID and solutions.

**Healing Ceremony - Saturday, October 16, 2021, 5:00 PM-7:00 PM – “Remember”**

- This program will be a hybrid event at the BDM for stream.
- The committee’s desire is that the event would take place in front of the BDM Museum either with a tent and or street blocked off.
- The Healing Ceremony will consist of an open with Musical Selection, Interfaith Prayers for Post COVID and Racial Justice Healing offered by local clergy of various denominations, Liturgical or African Dance to recorded music of live drums, a historical timeline -given by Commissioner Cheryl McLeod and an explanation of the ceremony given by Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene.
- A candle lighting ceremony will take place to remember those who transitioned due to COVID or Violence in Maryland.
  - LED candles will be used and as the bulb is turned to light, a person’s name will be called with a pledge to take action to keep that person’s light shining.
  - The event will end with the singing of “This Little Light of Mine”.

**Anti-Racism Training Series Part III - Tuesday, October 19, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM – “Reclaim”**

This event is the third part of webinars presented by the BDM and hosted by Sabriyah Hassan.

- The committee has requested that the subject of Critical Race Theory be touched upon by the presenters.

*Individual Commissioner Reports*

- Commissioner Marilyn Hatza reported that the MCAAHC’s AAHPG has produced an African American Heritage preservation grant recipient that is showing fruit from the grant.
  - Sunday, June 13, 2021, Luke’s United Methodist church will be hosting a meeting in their fellow ship hall for this endeavor.
  - They were awarded the MCAAHC’s AAHPG. This church was established post emancipation which composed of a church, school, and a society hall. All are welcome to attend this affair.
- Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson shared that a lady from the Fayette Street Community is looking forward to having an opportunity to work with the MCAAHC on a collection she has of this historical African American Community.
- Commissioner Steven X. Lee was asked to serve on an education committee for the Revolutionary War Colonies. He is working on a new educational program for students regarding the Revolutionary War curriculum.

- A video was produced on the Revolutionary War that mostly contained information on Europeans but no information on the contribution of African Americans.
- The group considered what Commissioner Lee shared and are redoing the video to be all inclusive.
- Commissioner Reggie Turner shared that Governor Larry Hogan has appointed him to the Maryland Semi Sesquicentennial Commission 250. He will be assisting with this celebration to educate all people that African Americans were not free on July 4, 1776.
- Commissioner Iris Leigh Barnes report that is also working in Hartford County on the Sesquicentennial Commission 250 so that all the work that is being shared is inclusive sharing African American works as well.

#### *New Business*

#### *Elections of Chair and Vice Chair Positions for the MCAAHC Individual*

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene shared that she is the Opens Meeting Act Liaison for the MCAAHC She led the charge and plea for nominations for the vice chair position of the MCAAHC.

#### *Elections of Vice Chair Position for the MCAAHC*

- Chair Wilson nominated Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby to serve as the Vice Chair of the MCAAHC. Commissioner Anthony seconded and with total consensus of the MCAAHC the motion carried.
- Maya Davis nominated Chair Tamara Wilson to serve as the Chair of the MCAAHC. Commissioner Steven X. Lee and Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby both seconded and with total consensus of the MCAAHC the motion carried.

Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Cheryl McLeod, and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant