

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

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 4, 2021

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Iris Leigh Barnes, Maya Davis, Janice Curtis Greene, Marilyn Hatza, Edwin T. Johnson, Melvin Kelly, Steven X. Lee, Lopez Matthews, Cheryl McLeod, Torrey Snow, Anthony Spencer, Elinor Thompson, Reggie Turner, and Tamara E. Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 11:12 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 August 6, 2021 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) public meeting. There was a general consensus of the MCAAHC Commissioners that the minutes were unanimously approved and accepted.

### **Officer Reports**

*MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

Chair Wilson gave a report where she shared that:

- The MCAAHC African American Heritage Preservation Grants Committee has completed its work of ranking the various candidates for this grant.
- On Friday, October 8, 2021 at 11:00 a.m., the MCAAHC will have a closed session where all MCAAHC Commissioners will be looking to cast their vote for the approval to submit the nominations for the recipients of this grant.
- Chair Wilson took a moment and congratulated Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby in being the “Lawyer of the Year” by his peers in the area of Administrative and Regulatory Law in Washington, DC.
  - She also recognized Commissioner Lopez Matthews who received the Mary Bethune Award from the Association for the Study and Life of African American History.
  - Chair Wilson then congratulated Executive Director Chanel Compton for being one of 12 women to receive the Fannie Lou Hamer Award for excelling in her field working to improve civil and human rights.

*MCAAHC Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby*

Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby gave a report where he shared that:

- He thanked everyone for attending the MCAAHC’s public teleconferencing meeting.
- The Banneker-Douglass Museum is back open up and running.
  - Vice Chair Frisby thanked the MCAAHC Commissioners as well as the public who attended the Grand Reopening Celebration of the Banneker-Douglass Museum on Saturday, September 18, 2021.

## Director's Report

*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

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

- The BDM has a small but mighty group of staff members: Ms. Sabriyah Hassan, Director of Program's, Ms. Schillicia Howard, Curator of Collections, Mr. Robert James, Director of Marketing and Communications and Mr. LeRonn Herbert, Administrative Manager and Special Assistant to the MCAAHC.
- The MCAAHC and the BDM have reached a tremendous milestone of raising \$58,000 of the \$200,000 for the annual campaign.
  - \$30,000 of the \$58,000 was raised at the Private Donor's Affair that took place on Friday, September 17, 2021.
- Director Compton also reported that the BDM has had a significant amount of visitation and engagement from the public at large.
  - She shared that:
    - 11,458 individuals joined the BDM virtual programming for the month of August.
    - 81 individuals attended the BDM Re-Opening Reception on Friday, September 17, 2021.
    - 300 individuals attended the BDM Block Party on Saturday, September 18, 2021.
    - 45,928 individuals joined the BDM virtual programming for the month of September. This 34, 470 individuals increase was due to a partnership with the Governor's Office sharing their contacts to support the BDM-MCAAHC programming and events.
- Director Compton admonished the public to come out to the BDM and see the new "Freedom Bound, Blacks on the Chesapeake Exhibit" that has been on exhibit from Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup>- March 1, 2022.
  - She shared that the museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- The BDM-MCAAHC Symposium will take place during the month of October.
  - She said that it will be a great time of reflecting, renewing, reviving and networking.
- Director Compton also asked the public to join the BDM & the MCAAHC for their signature Kwanzaa program that will take place on Saturday, December 11, 2021 from 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

## African American Heritage Preservation Grant Committee Report

*Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Chair*

Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson, Chair of the Program's Committee reported that the AAHPG Committee has made an intentional and deliberate effort to get into the details of this program and where it needs to go.

- Commissioner Johnson said that this year marks the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the African American Heritage Preservation Grant being provided by MCAAHC, Maryland Historical Trust in preserving African American History in the State of Maryland.
- He shared that there are a significant amount of applicants for this grant but only \$1 million dollars can be allocated for all potential recipients.
- Commissioner Johnson shared that there is a lot of interest of African American sites, across the State of Maryland, that need to be preserved but the amount of money to reward the applicants has remained underfunded.
- There were 36 applicants who applied for the grant but only 10 could be funded at this time.

- Commissioner Johnson said that the committee shared that:
  - The AAHPG looks to have applications across every county across the state where they are:
    - Looking at unique projects that haven't been looked at before.
    - Determining if there are unique trends that may or have affected applicants from receiving the grant.
    - Reviewing areas that have not applied and determine why.
    - Developing effective and efficient ways to reach other heritage sites and projects to share vital African American History so that the history is not lost.
    - The AAHPG can fairly move forward.
    - On Friday, October 8, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. the MCAAHC will go into a closed session to vote on the AAHPG recipients to be submitted to MHT.

### **MCAAHC Legislative Component**

*MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

Chair Wilson shared that in addition to raising \$200,000 for the BDM, the MCAAHC is working on a legislative component to reach out to the leadership of the State of Maryland.

- Chair Wilson said that the Legislative Session of the Maryland General Assembly starts January 12, 2022 and ends April 11, 2022.
  - MCAAHC will advocate to the Senate President, Speaker of the House, Legislative Black Caucus, Members of the Appropriations Committee, Budget and Taxation Committees as well as the Governor's Office.
    - Meetings have been scheduled now through February 2022.
    - Letters are to be sent to the MCAAHC Commissioners local officials by November 1, 2021.
    - Additional meetings with local officials should take place by January 1, 2022.

*MCAAHC Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby*

Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby reported that the MCAAHC's goal is to increase Capital Grant funding from \$1 million to \$5 million dollars for the AAHPG sites in Maryland.

From this endeavor the MCAAHC looks to:

- Petition funds for BDM Capital needs of \$3 million dollars to replace HVAC system, building façade repairs, upgrades for a new permanent exhibit gallery as well as repairs to historic wing of the museum.
- Increase BDM operations by 50% to improve capacity of collections growth and management, programming and outreach, as well as exhibition development.

### **Guest Speaker**

*Mr. Lou Fields, President of the Black Chamber of Commerce and the Black Charm City Tours Incorporated*

Mr. Lou Fields came to the MCAAHC meeting to share the work and initiatives he has been significantly involved with.

- Mr. Fields took a moment to recognize the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the great Henrietta Lacks whose “HELA” cells brought about a major advancement in medical procedures, medicine and the lives of individuals across the world.
- He also shared that the struggles of African American Heritage institutions today is the same type of struggles that Frederick Douglass addressed in his time.
- During the 2022 Maryland General Assembly, Legislative Session, Mr. Fields will be petitioning legislators to have House Bill 1837 to move beyond the Ways and Means Committee.
  - House Bill 1837 and Senate Bill 628 is designed to appropriate funding for African American tourism sites as well.
  - Senate Bill 628 passed through the senate but has not passed through the house.
- Mr. Fields has also shared his thoughts that the African American Heritage Preservation program be connected with African American Tourism in the State of Maryland so that collectively the groups can go before the Maryland General Assembly with a \$10 million package.
  - \$3 million would be given the first year and \$1 million the years thereafter leading to \$10 million total.
  - In addition to these charges, Mr. Fields has suggested that he, the MCAAHC and African American Heritage Tourism petition the legislators of the Maryland General Assembly to provide COVID Relief Funding since COVID has significantly hurt the African American heritage business.

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 12:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant