

Minutes of the
Ninety-Sixth Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
October 13, 2022

The ninety-sixth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened on October 13, 2022 via web conference call and live-streaming. The public was notified about the meeting and had the opportunity to listen/watch via live-streaming.

Authority Members/Designees Present

Robert S. McCord, Secretary, MD Department of Planning and Chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority; Robert D. Campbell (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation and serving as the Vice Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority); Marianne Harms (Speaker of the House representative); Pete Leshner (MD Association of Counties representative); Daniel Spedden (MD Tourism Development Board representative); Burton Kummerow (President of the Senate representative); Marty Baker (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary James F. Ports); Lee Towers (representing MD Higher Education Commission Secretary James D. Fielder, Jr.); Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer); Dennis Doster (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism); Amy Seitz (representing MD Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Kenneth C. Holt); Natalie Chabot (Representative for MD Greenways)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Nicholas Redding (President of the Senate representative); John A. Kinnaird (MD Municipal League representative); Janice Hayes-Williams (Speaker of the House representative); Elizabeth Fitzsimmons (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary R. Michael Gill); Nina Settina (representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio); Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Joseph Bartenfelder); Bruce Lesh (representing MD State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury)

Staff Present

Ariane Hofstedt (Maryland Historical Trust); Andrew Arvizu (Maryland Historical Trust); Martha Waldron (Maryland Historical Trust); Nell Ziehl (Maryland Historical Trust); Rieyn DeLony (Office of the Attorney General)

Heritage Area Directors/Staff Present

Lucille Walker (Southern Maryland Heritage Area and Co-Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition); Brigitte Carty (Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway and Co-Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition); Sarah Rogers (Montgomery County Heritage Area); Deidra Ritchie (Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area); Elizabeth Shatto (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area); Carol Benson (Chesapeake Crossroads/Four Rivers / Annapolis, London Town and South County Heritage Area); Meagan Baco (Maryland Milestones / Anacostia Trails Heritage Area); Lisa Challenger (Beach to Bay Heritage Area); Kim Folk (Mountain Gateway to the West Heritage Area); Aaron Shapiro (Patapsco Valley Heritage Area); Holly Gilpin (Heart of Chesapeake Country); Brandon R. (Southern Maryland Heritage Area)

CALL TO ORDER

Upon Mr. Robert McCord's absence, Mr. Robert Campbell opened the meeting at 10:03 and welcomed the Authority to the meeting.

ROLL-CALL ATTENDANCE

Mr. Andrew Arvizu conducted a roll call to confirm MHAA members' attendance. With 12 members in attendance and 7 members absent, there was a quorum present, and a two-thirds majority.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM July 14, 2022 MEETING

Mr. Campbell asked for discussion of the meeting Minutes from the July 14, 2022 meeting of the Authority.

Mr. Dan Spedden made the following motion:

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the July 14, 2022 Minutes as presented.

The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions.

MANAGEMENT REPORT (Ariane Hofstedt, MHAA Administrator; Andrew Arvizu, MHAA Assistant Administrator)

Introducing Martha Waldron

Ms. Ariane Hofstedt introduced Ms. Martha Waldron as the new MHAA Assistant Administrator who joined MHAA at the end of August.

Ms. Waldron greeted the Authority and stated that she was excited to be working with MHAA.

MHAA Financing Fund Report

Ms. Hofstedt reported that MHAA's Financing Fund currently contains \$41,558.32 and shared that a detailed breakdown of the fund was included in the meeting materials sent to the Authority.

Mr. Campbell asked if there was any notable activity related to the financing fund since the July 14, 2022 meeting. Ms. Hofstedt provided an explanation as to why there is a surplus, which can be attributed to closing out Fiscal Year 2020 grants at the end of September, 2022. Unused funds from previous years explain the higher balance.

Ms. Hofstedt also raised the point that the Authority had taken a pause in reserving emergency funds for the financing fund due to COVID and will be discussed later in this meeting as per Mr. McCord's wishes.

Racial Equity Working Group Update

Ms. Hofstedt reported that unfortunately, Symphonic Strategies staff experienced a medical emergency which has delayed the report. However, things are progressing and MHAA staff has received a draft report which Symphonic is revising. The report will include an analysis of policy

documents, the grant process, and heritage area themes in addition to demographics and quantity vs. value of grants received over the years. The goal is for it to be completed by first week of November.

Ms. Hofstedt explained that due to the shifting timeline, Mr. McCord has suggested that MHAA hold a special meeting for Symphonic Strategies to present to the Authority. MHAA staff will send out a scheduling link to confirm the date and time.

Marketing Working Group Updates

Ms. Hofstedt reported that MHAA staff is gearing up to reinstate the working group in January. MHAA staff is reviewing minutes, definitions, and goals that were previously discussed.

Mr. Campbell asked if it would be appropriate for the Marketing Working Group to be present for the Symphonic Strategies Racial Equity Report presentation in November. Ms. Hofstedt will take this question into consideration and check their availability.

Ms. Chabot asked if MHAA staff would consider hosting the November meeting with Symphonic Strategies in-person. Ms. Hofstedt thanked her for the suggestion and will take it into consideration when scheduling.

FY 2023 Grant Round

Mr. Arvizu updated the Authority on the staff workload transition from MHT grant staff to MHAA program staff for drafting and issuing grant agreements for FY23 grantees. Staff are looking towards the typical December/January timeframe for sending these out and will be prioritizing heritage area Management grants and a few high-priority/time-sensitive Capital Project grants.

Mr. Campbell thanked staff for being flexible.

Ms. Shatto asked if project grantees were aware of this timeline and if Heritage Area Directors could be of assistance. Mr. Arvizu responded that yes, the orientation video did mention this timeline and we will be in touch if there are any setbacks or delays.

Survey on MHAA Grant Accessibility

Mr. Arvizu reminded everyone that MHAA produced a survey to understand why there was a decrease in grant applications in fiscal year 2023 and to understand potential barriers. The survey was sent to past MHAA applicants who did not apply for funding in FY23. Out of 450 organizations, we received around 40 responses (9% response rate).

Despite the small response rate, there are three takeaways to consider: 1) COVID was perhaps not as big of a barrier as we previously expected; 2) applicants struggled with application process – many reported that the MHT website is unwieldy, and that the application is too difficult to complete; and 3) about 25% of respondents mentioned that their organizations struggled to come up with matching funds required for grant. Mr. Arvizu stressed that perhaps grantees are not aware of the recent change to the any combination match of cash and in-kind sources. Key action

items include simplifying application wherever possible and continuing to highlight the flexibility in matching funds. The full report is available on the Authority's Microsoft Teams.

Mr. Campbell stated that the Authority remains committed to making the application accessible.

Ms. Hughes observed that the critique about the complicated application is helpful information but is not surprising. She noted that as we look closer at the initiatives coming out of the Governor's Grants Office and the MEGA Council who are proposing a single grant application portal across agencies for state funds, a one-size-fits-all system will NOT streamline and simplify the grant application process. This survey provides an interesting data point for the program.

Ms. Baker agreed with Ms. Hughes and mentioned that the MD Department of Transportation simplified their application process by including parameter questions and/or auto-fill fields to help applicants understand the requirements. A generalized approach, as suggested by the MEGA Council, would make this difficult.

Ms. Harms asked for clarification about how the matching funds are mandated by the State and if there is room for adjustment as an independent entity. Mr. Arvizu reminded the Authority that the program does have the authority to adjust the match as was done in FY20 when the Authority decided to accept any combination of cash and in-kind matching funds.

Ms. Harms agreed that a state-wide grant application would not be applicable to many of our grantees.

Ms. Seitz agreed that the MHAA application is onerous, and the state-wide system is not useful. She suggested that we try to evaluate why we are asking the application questions and if they are relevant or necessary, both for the benefit of applicants and the reviewers. She will send example applications of DHCD's revised application to MHAA staff.

Mr. McCord joined the meeting. Mr. Campbell brought him up to speed on the Grant Accessibility Survey results and suggested recommendations for the future.

Mr. McCord thanked Mr. Campbell and mentioned that he is also concerned about the state-wide requirement being recommended by the MEGA Council and will continue to advocate that MHT and MHAA be exempt from that process.

Ms. Seitz says it is better to address the MHAA application and make the changes sooner than later while the MEGA Council continues to convene.

MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS COALITION (MHAC) REPORT Lucille Walker and
Brigitte Carty, Co-Chairs

Ms. Walker greeted the Authority and reminded everyone that Gail Owings has been present at the MEGA Council meetings and appreciates the work that everyone is doing in this regard.

Ms. Walker introduced the Coalition Report by updating the Authority on the successful Maryland Association of Counties meeting held in August and informed everyone that she had a good conversation with Governor Hogan who encouraged the Coalition to request supplemental funding. A memo has been submitted to Mr. McCord.

Mr. McCord is in support and has instructed his staff to start the request internally.

Ms. Walker expressed thanks on behalf of the Coalition.

At MACO, the Coalition presented on the uniqueness of Maryland's state-based heritage program and is pleased with the value placed in the state on this program. Ms. Walker reported that Heritage Area Directors are working on their five-year plans and are also releasing their mini-grant programs.

Heritage Area Director Highlights

Ms. Shatto (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area) invited the Authority to attend their upcoming year-in-review meeting hosted at Antrim 1844 in Taneytown on Thursday, November 3. Details are available at bit.ly/hcwha2022.

Ms. Shatto gave a battlefield-oriented report and shared that the Battle of Antietam and the Battle of South Mountain both marked their 160th anniversaries in 2022. She shared information about the soft opening of a new exhibition in the Front Parlor of the Newcomer House at Antietam. Ms. Shatto also gave an update on the MHAA-funded parking area at the Battle of Falling Waters 1863 which will be celebrated at a Ribbon Cutting on October 27, just in time for Gettysburg's 160th anniversary in July 2023. Then, Ms. Shatto presented on the MHAA-funded projects at Monocacy National Battlefield, including interpretive wayside signage and design concepts and schematics for the new visitor center exhibits. Finally, Ms. Shatto highlighted the South Mountain Battlefield's new branding unveiled by Preservation Maryland, which will enhance the visitor experience throughout the entire heritage area.

Ms. Walker (Southern Maryland Heritage Area) updated the Authority on the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area process which has currently passed through the House of Representatives and will likely get through this session.

Ms. Walker also informed the Authority about the first stop of the 2022-2023 tour of the Smithsonian's *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* exhibit at the Farm Heritage Conservancy at Serenity Farm in partnership with Maryland Humanities.

ACTION ITEMS

Resolution R-200 to Approve a Request by the Montgomery County Heritage Area and Montgomery County to amend the boundary of the Montgomery County Heritage Area

Mr. Arvizu introduced the meeting's sole action item: a boundary amendment request from the Montgomery County Heritage Area to include the Aspin Hill Pet Cemetery and turned the floor over to Ms. Sarah Rogers to provide background information.

Ms. Rogers believes that this will be the first pet cemetery to be included in a heritage area. An overview of its history and significance can be found in the Authority's Microsoft Teams. The Montgomery County Humane Society is managing the property and is introducing youth education and community engagement opportunities. It serves as a valuable open space in the area and is an outstanding opportunity for visitors.

Ms. Hughes asked how this inclusion will stimulate heritage tourism, in addition to a community resource.

Ms. Rogers discussed the cultural shift in how people view their pets as family members and mentioned the notable pets buried there in addition to the site's searchable archive. Its proximity to Washington DC also provides numerous opportunities for storytelling.

Ms. Seitz asked about the marketing strategy and messaging of the site as a destination for the public.

Ms. Rogers explained that Aspin Hill is a very well-managed and high-profile organization that has an active core group of volunteers, successful fundraising initiatives, and is well known within the county and surrounding neighborhood. The heritage area is prepared to promote it as a site connected thematically to agriculture reserve and its proximity to DC.

Ms. Chabot asked if Aspin Hill fits within the heritage area's interpretive themes and existing programming.

Ms. Rogers said yes, particularly the relationship between people and animals. An important part of the heritage area's story is the change from a rural county to an urban county and the site has the ability to shed light on how much pets mean to people and why.

Mr. Campbell mentioned that he loves visiting cemeteries and would like to visit Aspin Hill!

Mr. Leshar thought the accompanying report with the boundary amendment was well researched (and entertaining!) and believes there is insight into the transformation of the landscape from farmland to pet cemetery to provide examples of the gentrifying impact of proximity to Washington, DC. Mr. Leshar believes there is a genuine contribution to the heritage area with this amendment.

Ms. Chabot suggested that the Authority take a tour of the site before taking a vote.

Mr. Kummerow asked how old the site is for clarification on its value as a heritage site.

Ms. Rogers replied that the site was founded in 1921 and is the oldest pet cemetery operating in the United States. She continued to give examples of the various stories that can be told by

highlighting some of the pets buried in the cemetery. These provide a window into different time periods.

Mr. Kummerow gave his support for the site.

Ms. Harms was fascinated by the report and suggested that the historical significance of the site, rather than the classification as a pet cemetery, ought to be prioritized. She concluded that because it is so different, perhaps we need to stretch our imaginations.

Ms. Rogers thanked Ms. Harms.

Mr. Kummerow made the following motion:

RESOLVED, that in accordance with Sections 13-1008(10) and 13-1111(m) of the Financial Institutions Article of the Code of Maryland, and COMAR 14.29.02.05C, the Authority approves the boundary amendment request dated September 7, 2022 submitted by the Montgomery County Heritage Area and Montgomery County to include the Aspin Hill Pet Cemetery.

Mr. Leshar seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with abstentions from Ms. Chabot and Ms. Seitz.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. McCord asked the Authority to consider adding “acquisition or option to acquire” as an eligible expense for significant properties when it comes to using emergency funds.

Mr. Leshar asked if the Authority’s statute allows for funds to be applied to property acquisition.

Ms. Hofstedt replied yes, it does. She then asked Ms. DeLony if the current language in the emergency fund policy is broad enough to allow for the use of emergency funds for acquisition or option to acquire.

Ms. DeLony said that the policy does not change what the eligible uses are and that this is clearly an eligible use of funds. This does not require a vote as it is already allowed.

Ms. Hofstedt reminded the Authority that before COVID, the Authority would designate \$100,000 from each year’s appropriation in a portion of funds for emergency funds. It was paused during COVID and now we would like to know if the Authority would like to reinstate this designation for the upcoming fiscal year 2024.

Ms. Seitz made the following motion:

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the reservation of \$100,000 from MHAA’s FY24 annual appropriation, to be used to fund emergency grants in accordance with MHAA’s Emergency Grant Policy.

Mr. Campbell seconded the motion which passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Ms. Hofstedt mentioned that she will be reaching out to Authority members and their agencies to discuss member appointments and reappointments for the next year.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCord expressed his appreciation for the Authority and adjourned the meeting at 11:26.