

**Minutes of the
One Hundred and Third Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
April 11, 2024**

The one hundred and third meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened on April 11, 2024, virtually and recorded to share with the public.

Authority Members/Designees Present

Rebecca L. Flora (MD Department of Planning Secretary and Chairperson for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority), Melissa Archer (representing MD Department of Housing & Community Development Secretary Jake Day), Elizabeth Fitzsimmons (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Kevin Anderson), Geoffrey Newman (representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Acting Secretary Sanjay Rai), Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer), Pete Leshar (MD Association of Counties representative), Natalie Chabot (Representative for MD Greenways), Nicholas Redding (President of the Senate representative), Dennis Doster (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism), Robert D. Campbell (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation and serving as the Vice Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority), Peter Ramsey (representing MD State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury), Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld), Sandy Turner (representing the Maryland Tourism Development Board); Mary Anne Harms (Speaker of the House representative); Judd Vickers (representing MD Department of Natural Resources)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks), Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative), Mary Anne Harms (Speaker of the House representative), John A. Kinnaird (MD Municipal League representative)

Staff Present

Andrew Arvizu (Assistant Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Rieyn DeLony (Office of the Attorney General); Nell Ziehl (Chief, Office of Planning, Outreach and Education); Brenna Spray (MHT and MHAA Outreach Coordinator)

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Rebecca Flora convened the meeting at 1:01 and thanked everyone for attending. She explained that Ms. Ariane Hofstedt could not attend due to a family emergency.

Mr. Andrew Arvizu conducted the roll call.

Sec. Flora began with a welcome to Ms. Sandy Turner, the newest MHAA member.

Ms. Turner thanked Sec. Flora and said a hello to the group.

Action Items

Resolution R-100 to Approve Minutes from the January 11, 2024, meeting.

Sec. Flora asked for comments on minutes of the January 11 MHAA meeting.

Sec. Flora called for a motion for the approval of the January Authority meeting minutes. Mr. Geoff Newman made the following motion, which Mr. Peter Leshar seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the January 11, 2024 Minutes.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Resolution R-200 to Approve a Request by the Heritage Montgomery Heritage Area and Montgomery County to Amend the Heritage Montgomery County Boundary.

Mr. Arvizu introduced the request from Heritage Montgomery and Montgomery County to add the Nepal Education and Cultural Center to the heritage area. They noted that the current boundaries run right up to the outside of the education center, where they have an historic dairy center. They explained that the site is under consideration for a FY25 grant.

Ms. Sarah Rogers provided additional context on the education center and explained the importance of the NECC to Montgomery County. It supports the preservation of a historic farm property while adapting for use of a community representative of a diverse immigrant group. This will expand the interpretation of an important cultural group in the county, to build an inclusive regional identity. Ms. Rogers introduced Mr. Mohan Karki to help field questions.

Sec. Flora opened the floor to questions and comments, of which there were none.

Mr. Karki thanked Ms. Rogers for her help with the process and stated that his group is excited to open its doors to the wider community.

Ms. Elizabeth Hughes made the following motion, which Mr. Newman seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves—in accordance with Sections 13-1008(10) and 13-1111(m) of the Financial Institutions Article of the Code of Maryland, and COMAR 14.29.02.05.C.— the request by the Heritage Montgomery Heritage Area and Montgomery County to Amend the Heritage Montgomery Heritage Area to include the Nepal Education and Cultural Center

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Sec. Flora congratulated the education center and heritage area for a well-prepared application and for their success.

Resolution R-300 to Approve a Request by the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area and Talbot County to Amend the Stories of the Chesapeake Boundary.

Mr. Arvizu introduced the request from Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area and Talbot County to add the Town of Trappe to the heritage area. They noted that this town was originally intended to be a part of the heritage area. They added that the town is surrounded by the heritage area currently. Mr. Arvizu introduced Ms. Gail Owings.

Ms. Owings provided additional context on the Town of Trappe and its importance to Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, including the interpretive elements of African American history, early American history, and religious history. She went on to say they are excited to interpret this history down along the Choptank River. Ms. Owings then introduced Ms. Kristen Goller who thanked everyone and expressed her excitement for the Town of Trappe to be a part of the heritage area.

Sec. Flora then opened the floor to questions or comments.

Mr. Leshar commented that it is a common occurrence for these small jurisdictions to have excluded themselves originally from the heritage area, but many have started requesting to become a part of it. He feels this is fulfilling the original vision of the heritage area.

Sec. Flora thanked Mr. Leshar and opened the floor to more questions or comments.

Ms. Natalie Chabot asked if this boundary amendment includes the new lakeside development that is in the process of construction.

Ms. Owings explained that it does include that development project, filling in the gap on the map of the heritage area.

Ms. Chabot asked for clarification on why this development is included in the new area of the heritage area.

Ms. Owings explained that usually the entire boundary of a town is included to ensure nothing is missed.

Ms. Chabot is hesitant on agreeing that this development should be a part of the heritage area, as the development is separated from the town itself and has its own entrance.

Sec. Flora agreed with Ms. Chabot's thought process but stated that she thought it would be a bigger challenge to exclude a small part of the town rather than including the whole thing. She explained that excluding a small part might create more issues down the line. It was the town's

decision to annex the development into the town boundary, and so Sec. Flora said in her opinion it's better to follow their lead and include the entire town. She encouraged the MHAA members to vote on the resolution based on their feelings on this matter.

Ms. Melissa Archer requested more information on the process on how the heritage areas were originally created, and how small towns like Trappe were able to initially opt out. Is this something we should reevaluate, allowing them to opt back in all at once?

Mr. Arvizu explained that each entity needs to give express approval in the process. For some heritage areas, this process was easier because there were fewer incorporated municipalities that they had to work with. For larger heritage areas and ones with more incorporated municipalities, they had to work with each individual municipality to gain that approval. They explained this could be dozens that they needed the express approval of.

Ms. Archer asked if that is in statute, and Ms. Rieyn DeLony stated she believes it is in statutes, but that she would check.

Ms. Owings clarified that they not only needed the approval of these municipalities, but that each town needed to amend their comprehensive plan at the time and many did not have the capacity to do this at the time. This requirement was often the reason towns did not join the heritage area at the time.

Sec. Flora thanked Ms. Owings for that clarification and stated that MHAA staff can get Ms. Archer more background information on this.

Dr. Julie Schablitsky commented that she is a resident of Trappe, and one thing everyone should remember is that while these new developments are being annexed into the town, they are bringing with them archaeological resources. She continued that the lakeside at Trappe has many creeks and historic farmsteads, and everyone should think about how these resources can tell the stories of Trappe in the county. It may be modern development, but there are things beneath the surface that might not yet be obvious.

Sec. Flora noticed that Mr. Leshar had had his hand raised, but Mr. Leshar stated he didn't have anything else to add as the question had been adequately answered.

Ms. Elizabeth Hughes made the following motion, which Mr. Newman seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves—in accordance with Sections 13-1008(10) and 13-1111(m) of the Financial Institutions Article of the Code of Maryland, and COMAR 14.29.02.05.C.—the request by the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area and Talbot County to Amend the Stories of the Chesapeake Boundary to include the Town of Trappe

Dr. Schablitsky abstained. Everyone else was in favor.

MHAA Chairperson Report

Sec. Flora reminded the group that the Executive Committee has the authority to quickly approve requests that come in for emergency grants. She reported that there was one MHAA Emergency Grant from the National Road Heritage Foundation that was reviewed and approved in March. She stated that now that the Committee is larger, the process is much easier. She stated that the project was very worthy of the emergency grant and that it met the criteria of emergency grants.

Resolution R-100 FY24 Emergency Grant Request from National Road Heritage Foundation, Inc.

RESOLVED, that at its meeting on March 13, 2024, the MHAA Executive Committee approves the request for a \$7,465 MHAA Emergency Grant to the National Road Heritage Foundation, Inc. for the purchase and installation of a new HVAC unit at the National Road Museum, located at 214 N. Main Street, Boonsboro, MD 21713. It is necessary to replace the museum's failing HVAC unit now to prevent further damage to the structure and stabilize environmental conditions prior to the museum's upcoming opening scheduled for Fall 2024. This emergency grant will be funded with FY 2024 MHAA emergency grant funds. All eligible expenses may be covered by the grant and required matching funds.

MHAA Chairperson Report

Strategic Planning Consultant Update

Sec. Flora explained that the Executive Committee took on the role of hiring a strategic planning consultant. She stated that the process was not yet complete, so no announcements will be made yet. She updated the group that nine really good RFPs came in, which were put through a technical review. She thanked the Executive Committee for their time contributed towards this effort in ensuring it's not down to just the staff to do the work. Sec. Flora stated that this process was something the Executive Committee felt they needed to do directly. She explained a scoring process was used and the contract for their top pick is now being finalized. and that an announcement is coming soon. She stated that she hopes there will be a kickoff of the strategic plan process by the end of April to early May and went on to say that this process would be a large one that the heritage areas would be a part of. Sec. Flora welcomed more comments from the Executive Committee and staff.

Ms. Lucille Walker commented that the Coalition had hoped to be a part of the consultant selection process, even in an advisory capacity, as they have been in the past. She stated the Coalition hopes to be involved in the planning any way they can, rather than being presented with comments at the end. She concluded that the Coalition looks forward to working together on the strategic plan process.

Sec. Flora stated that there will be ample opportunity for the Coalition to participate in the planning process with the consultant. She explained that she felt very confident with the Executive Committee team making the decision about the proposals, particularly to ensure a speedy conclusion to that part of the process. She concluded that she is excited to see this move forward, and that as the process will be transparent and everyone will be engaged.

MHAA Management Report

Financing Fund

Mr. Arvizu updated the Authority on the current balance of the financing fund. The fund is currently approx. \$370,000, which is an increase since the last meeting on account of grants that have closed under budget. There is also a balance of approx. \$64,000 in the emergency grant fund, which is down due to the National Road Museum emergency grant discussed earlier. They explained that these funds will be rolling over into the \$370,000 and reminded everyone that at the last meeting the Authority approved the resolution to add an additional \$100,000 for emergency grant funding for FY25. Mr. Arvizu also stated that the full \$6M appropriation is expected for next year and that staff is moving forward under that expectation. They welcomed any questions about the finances and offered that more details could be sent after the meeting.

Sec. Flora opened the floor to questions and comments, of which there were none. She added that with the legislative session concluded the budget is finalized but that she won't be able to comment until she receives the finalized budget. She is happy where things ended up in general, though.

Mr. Nicholas Redding asked Ms. Liz Shatto's question from the chat: does the fund balance go to grant applications on the reserve list? And he followed up with a question from the chat asked by Ms. Brigitte Carty: will there be more than \$500,000 in the balance?

Mr. Arvizu confirmed that there will be more than \$500,000 in the balance at the beginning of FY25 with the addition of the \$100,000 they mentioned earlier. They continued that typically the remaining balance from roll over funding doesn't go towards project grants in the current year that are on the reserve list. When grants come in under budget or grants decline awards in the current fiscal year, those funds will go towards the reserve list. However, they explained that the grants that have increased the balance since our last meeting have been from previous fiscal years, and when this happens the excess funds go to towards the emergency fund. They did clarify that there is precedent for the authority choosing to use a portion of the excess emergency funds to provide funding for grants that are on the current fiscal year's reserve list.

Mr. Redding thanked Mr. Arvizu for their answer.

FY25 Grants Review Panel

Mr. Arvizu updated the Authority on the FY25 Grants Review Panel. They discussed that nine new members were added for the Grants Review Panel for FY25, bringing the total to 39 members with a wide variety of professional, geographic, and demographic backgrounds, including state representation from DHCD, Commerce, DNR, MHT, and DOT, which allows decisions to be made to align with wider state agencies. They also emphasized that the Grants Review Panel is made up of experts in the field of education, interpretation, architecture, tourism, cultural heritage, historic preservation, archaeology, museums, natural resources, and more. They explained that the Grants Review Panel has undertaken two trainings this year, one with a new bias awareness component (like geographic or personal biases). Mr. Arvizu reminded the group that this year a small group format is being trialed. In previous years, each grant review panelist was given an assignment of grants based on their own expertise. This year, panelists were divided into small groups with a variety of different expertise and geographic representation. They explained that everyone in that group will be reading the same selection of applications, which will cover two or three heritage areas. The hope is to allow each group to become more knowledgeable of their individual heritage area and its priorities. It also allows for small group meetings where panelists can discuss each application and speak with heritage area directors about any questions they might have. These groups will be reviewing applications from April 24 when they receive their applications to May 30 when scores are due.

Mr. Arvizu then went through key dates for the FY25 review process schedule, with 10 additional days to schedule for MHAA members to review funding recommendations from the Panel. They stated that on June 17, 2024, MHAA members will receive the list of nominations and that MHAA members will have until June 26, 2024, to send any comments or questions to staff. They asked that MHAA members also hold in their calendar the afternoon of July 9, 2024, for a possible special meeting to resolve any questions and discuss the recommendations by the Panel. The review period is not meant to duplicate the efforts of the Grants Review Panel but is intended to provide an opportunity to raise any red flags and concerns that Authority members might have regarding decisions with what grants are being funded, particularly related to local priorities and any partial funding.

Mr. Arvizu explained everyone is welcome to request grant materials, but to please remember that everything needs to remain confidential, including the nomination rankings.

Sec. Flora thanked Mr. Arvizu for the summary and added that the two-week review period came out of a suggestion from the Authority last year. She expressed how much responsibility this comes with to not look at things with individual biases and to remain confidential. She respects and appreciates the diverse and robust review process.

Mr. Leshar expressed his appreciation for the thought put into this solution, and thanked all those involved.

FY24 Grant Agreements and FY25 Applications

Mr. Arvizu discussed the status of the FY24 grant agreements and FY25 applications. They announced that there were 171 applications for FY25, up from 160 last year. They reminded the group that there have been lower than average application numbers the last two years, so it is good to see those numbers coming back up. They reminded the group that the applications have been distributed to all heritage area directors and that local reviews are underway.

Mr. Arvizu shared that 98% of all FY24 agreements have been signed, executed, and are underway, and that a handful of projects have already wrapped this year. There are two outliers with extenuating circumstances that MHAA staff is working closely with, and there is full confidence that they will be signed and executed in the next few weeks.

Mr. Arvizu asked if there were any questions, of which there were none.

Discussion Items

Setting a Goal for Emergency Grant Funding Reserve

Sec. Flora explained that the group would now be circling back to the question of setting a goal for the emergency grant funding reserve. She reminded everyone that we don't want to be too frugal, knowing that emergencies can happen at any time (like COVID or the bridge collapse). What is the right amount to set for the goal?

Sec. Flora discussed how accumulated emergency funds have been used in the past. During COVID-19, \$600,000 was spent on emergency grants. She stated that \$500,000 was previously put forward as a cap for the emergency grant funding reserve, and that she is recommending this amount as a goal. Sec. Flora asked Mr. Arvizu if this is something that could be put forward as a resolution today if there is support.

Mr. Arvizu replied that yes, it is something that could be voted on today, but that it can also be put forward next meeting.

Mr. Redding asked how the \$500,000 amount was decided, whether it is based on a percentage or because it just seemed like the right number. He continued that he was curious since the state has a reserve "rainy day fund" that is based on a percentage, so this is where his question is stemming from.

Sec. Flora thanked Mr. Redding for the question and stated that in general it is based on past trends and asked Mr. Arvizu what the range has been so that the correct amount could be

found. She continued that it was not based on percentage but other methodologies and requested Mr. Arvizu follow up.

Mr. Arvizu reminded the group that, although there wasn't a consensus, \$500,000 was a number discussed by the Authority at the last meeting, and that the number was not based on any specific methodology. At the last meeting, Mr. Arvizu said that MHAA staff had been asked to look into previous precedent for when money has been drawn from the emergency grant fund outside of regular emergency grants. Only two instances were found, the first being COVID when \$600,000 was pulled out and the second in FY20 when \$600,000 was converted to fund reserve list grants. They reiterated that the currently proposed \$500,000 amount was not based on any specific methodology.

Sec. Flora stated she's not asking for a resolution at this time. She suggested we come back at the next meeting with some options for a methodology and a particular resolution if the Authority wants to move in that direction. Alternatively, it could remain open ended, and no policy needs to be created around it.

Mr. Redding shared that Ms. Shatto in the chat stated that with the financial climate being better in recent years, this has not been something the group has had to deal with much since the budget has been more robust. He continued that Ms. Shatto was concerned with the potential for recapture if the program has money sitting there. Mr. Redding stated that he has reservations with having an emergency fund reserve and leaving money on the table when there are many real needs. He continued that budgeting for situations like COVID to happen again, when this was a rare occurrence, might set an unneeded precedent. He feels that not having a reserve fund is the better option, particularly since it would put a target on the program for recapture.

Sec. Flora thanked Mr. Redding. She reminded the group that it is about 10% of total appropriation and stated that it's still an open discussion, but 10% seems like a good place to start. She continued that she has a hard time envisioning not having an emergency fund at all, and suggested thinking about 5% or 2% of total appropriations. She felt that it was important to remember that funding sources could change down the road and to be mindful of this with planning. She stated from her experience, reserves always have at least 10%, but that there is no correct answer.

Mr. Redding asked if other agencies in the Authority that run grant programs have an emergency fund and what that looks like.

Ms. Archer said that having a reserve fund is a novel thing for her, DHCD doesn't reserve any for emergency funds. The closest they have is when grants are underbudget/unsent as Mr. Arvizu discussed earlier, where that portion can be used on a case-by-case basis for emergency

funding. She explained that DHCD is often targeted for money recapture, and so they would never be able to have \$500,000 sitting in the state coffers waiting to be used. They would be pushed to use it or give it back by DBM.

Ms. Liz Fitzsimmons asked what does “emergency” mean? In the years she’s been on the Authority, emergencies were interesting ones like a roof fell in and that resources needed to be protected. Is there a better definition of what constitutes an emergency? A major portion of the program is protecting the incredible sites that make Maryland special and so she has always looked at the emergency fund as a lifeline.

Sec. Flora agreed that it’s intended for the roof falling in situations, but welcomed Mr. Arvizu to add further context about the criteria specific to the fund.

Mr. Arvizu stated that MHAA staff has been looking towards creating a more refined emergency grant policy, but that ultimately any project is eligible for emergency grant funding if it is coming from a recommendation from the heritage area in question. This creates a locally focused grant program where it is up to the heritage area to make that compelling case and give the approval that whatever the issue is, it is an emergency.

Sec. Flora added that these grants are ones where the issue cannot wait until the next grant round cycle. She added that the Executive Committee would question why an emergency grant was not in the normal round, and it is because it is something urgent that has happened between rounds, and it would be devastating for the site if it didn’t go forward.

Mr. Arvizu agreed and continued that in some years there have been very few emergency grants, with maybe only \$30,000 spent, while other years it’s been a few hundred thousand dollars spent.

Sec. Flora requested a summary from the staff of what has been spent in the past. She proposed for the July meeting a ten year scan will be discussed. She welcomes the rest of the Authority to think about numbers and get back to staff before the next meeting.

Mr. Redding requested information on other state grants that maintain a reserve, perhaps the Rural Maryland Council, etc.

Sec. Flora agreed that this could be looked into. She continued that this would affect the operations of some of the heritage areas, which creates an interesting situation. She asked Mr. Arvizu if there is anything that mandates or any statutory requirements of the emergency fund, which Mr. Arvizu confirmed there is not. Sec. Flora stated that this fact means the Authority has the ability to determine how these funds are best used, but reminded the group that if there is no emergency fund and something does happen, they will need to be told to wait until the next grant round. She opened the floor to more questions or comments, which there were none.

Call for Review Panelists for Management and Marketing Applications

Mr. Arvizu explained that six members of MHAA are needed to serve on the review panels for the FY25 Management and Marketing applications. They stated that their time commitment would be from May 20 – June 14, 2024, with a final review meeting on June 14, 2024. There would be 13 Management grant applications and approx. 10-11 marketing grant applications.

Sec. Flora invited anyone interested to reach out to Mr. Arvizu directly.

Member Announcements

Maryland Mosaic 2026, Burt Kummerow, former MHAA member

Mr. Arvizu introduced Burt Kummerow of Maryland Mosaic 2026, who is a former MHAA member.

Mr. Kummerow thanked everyone for welcoming him back, and stated he was excited to be back amongst MHAA again. He explained the point of the project is to take advantage of the many anniversary events in Maryland. Mr. Kummerow introduced his wife, who is a major partner in the project.

Mr. Kummerow explained that there are many ways to promote the state in ways that are unusual for most people, but that this is about getting the entire state ready for the anniversary. Maryland is a small state with a big history. The project tried to create a mosaic of pieces from across the state that are first in the nation and in the state, which in turn helps Maryland stand out with its important history.

This project was a result of help from several MHAA members and all the heritage area directors. They have been able to produce a document of these firsts, which has been shared and promoted around the state. This was also presented to the history working group of the MD 250 Commission, who has recommended that it be adopted by the whole commission. They have a meeting with the whole commission soon, with hopes it will be promoted and adopted.

Mrs. Kummerow explained that they aren't yet sure what it means for the commission to adopt the project, as it hasn't been decided yet where their energy will be focused. So, the hope is that the commission will take them on as one of the 250th programs. She added that their book includes further information on many institutions, and so the hope is that these sites will be an umbrella group of Mosaic project partners. There are roughly 150 organizations in the book, which is beyond the Kummerow's capacity to handle themselves.

Mr. Kummerow shared that there is a website, marylandmosaic.org, which will be fully edited by May 1. He gave a summary of the website's capabilities, which include expansion for other anniversaries.

Mr. Kummerow once again thanked the group for their time.

Sec. Flora thanked the Kummerows for their news.

New Business

Sec. Flora welcomed any new business, but there were no comments.

Report from the Maryland Coalition of Heritage Areas

Ms. Brigitte Carty emphasized the importance of what Lucille said earlier in the meeting about the heritage areas and directors being an integral part of the strategic planning process. She also reemphasized something that they have brought up before, which is the concern around MHAA vs. MHT branding. The MHT Roadshow was recently advertised, which included the heritage areas program. She complimented the outreach coordinator, Brenna, about the work she's doing and the support they receive but finds the process confusing when MHAA is intermingled with MHT for marketing. She continued that all the heritage area directors agree that when they talk to their partners, it's difficult to separate the two entities, especially when they talk to local elected officials.

Ms. Carty stated that it was important that these officials and partners understand that the Maryland Heritage Area Authority Fund and Program are separate from the Maryland Historical Trust. She explained 10% of the money is allocated for an administrative office, which is currently MHT. This confusion between MHT and MHAA creates a lot of problems with the grant application process where they don't know the difference and think they have to do one or the other. She reemphasized the need for separate marketing.

Ms. Carty stated that they are heading into conference season and summertime at Ocean City, with MML and MACO coming up.

Sec. Flora stated that the branding issue can be addressed in the strategic plan.

Director Highlights

Chesapeake Country All-American Road Interpretive Plan

Ms. Owings presented the new vision for the Chesapeake Country All-American Road, which is a by-way that starts from the North in Chesapeake City and run throughout the entire Eastern Shore ending in Pocomoke City and Crisfield. An alliance was created between nine counties and three heritage areas on the shore. She continued that the group has been working hard to

interpret their resources, and so hired a consultant. It was realized that the by-way serves as the main connector for heritage tourism and links many heritage sites together. She shared that they were recently elected by Scenic America as America's Favorite By-Way, beating out the Blue Ridge Parkway and Big Sur.

Ms. Owings concluded her portion by sharing that recommendations were created for interpretation within the by-way. She then handed things over to Ms. Lisa Challenger to share their branding and signage.

Ms. Challenger shared their new logo and the sign that folks will see travelling along the 1419 mile by-way. This signage varied depending on type and location. She continued that Phase 1 after the interpretive plan was the website and brochure, and now this is the second tier of implementation. She then turned things over to Ms. Holly Gilpin.

Ms. Gilpin shared some more examples of rail mount signs that will go outside of visitor centers, directing visitors to learn about the by-way while they are visiting. Another type of sign she shared is a graphic panel style for sites that aren't open all the time, so visitors can still experience what they're looking at. She welcomed any feedback.

Ms. Fitzsimmons congratulated the three heritage areas on their work, stating she particularly loves the intersectionality of all the programs on the by-way.

Ms. Challenger continued that with the state tourism office's help in getting organized, they were able to successfully apply and win a statewide partnership award last year at the Maryland Tourism and Travel Summit for our efforts and partnership.

Sec. Flora thanked them.

Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Ms. Emily Huebner introduced herself as the Director of Operations and Programs. She updated the group on the opening of their visitor center at Antietam National Battlefield called Newcomer House. Newcomer house will be open in the spring with the first program of the season a presentation by Eleanor Lakin and David Gibney, the architect and restoration director who restored the house over the last two decades. They will discuss the restoration process and visitors can get a sneak peek of normally closed parts of the house. This event is on April 20th at 11:30am.

Ms. Huebner also updated the group that the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area is looking into other avenues to diversify their funding by bringing together a group of people in May. The heritage area is also working on a giving campaign. She shared that they had been in local news.

Sec. Flora has for any questions, and then introduced Ms. Rogers for Heritage Montgomery.

Heritage Montgomery Heritage Area

Ms. Rogers invited everyone to the 25th annual Heritage Days Weekend, where visitors receive free admission to over 30 museums in Montgomery County. She also shared that they are rolling out their new transportation brochure. They are working on four brochures to show off different highlight areas of the heritage area. This transportation brochure links to their crossroads and culture brochure that came out last year and they are hoping to release their agricultural brochure by fall.

Ms. Rogers shared that they will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Hungerford Resolves in Rockville, Maryland on June 9th with a festival and a reading of the Resolves. On June 1st, they will be hosting a colonial dinner to celebrate as well.

Ms. Rogers finished with news that over the last two years they have been working on a large video project, capturing each of their sites in three and a half minute videos. They just completed their 20th video, which can be found on the Heritage Montgomery YouTube page.

Sec. Flora thanked Ms. Rogers and commented how exciting all these events sound.

Anacostia Trails Heritage Area

Mx. Megan Baco introduced Valerie Woodall as the newest fulltime staff member at Anacostia Trails Heritage Area.

Ms. Woodall said thank you to Mx. Baco and said hello to the Authority.

Mx. Baco discussed the GIS sign project they are implementing, which is a survey of their GIS signage, so they have a clear picture of what has been implemented, where they're located, and how that all integrates into the heritage area as a whole. Ms. Woodall has already been helping to scale and deploy the project, which will hopefully encourage wider community engagement. Beta testing has been conducted, but they're looking forward to a demonstration or tutorial in the future to show what they're doing.

Mx. Baco explained that ATHA is also working on boundary expansions, referencing thousands of pages of other foundational documents and their 2022 boundary expansion feasibility study, which is partially funded by MHAA. Current projects show that the geographic scale of the heritage area would at least triple, so they are doing the boundary assessment carefully.

Mx. Baco concluded that they are the chairperson of the Maryland Museums Association, and they thanked everyone on the call who advocated for the museum assistance funding bill. It passed unfunded, but did pass, and they are very appreciative of everyone's efforts. Particularly Mr. Leshner and Mr. Redding, and everyone else who put out a letter of support. They stated this is a step in the right direction. They also shared that the heritage area is able to provide bussing and a special workshop about civil rights history to attendees of the American Alliance

of Museums conference coming to Baltimore in May. The bus tour will take attendees up to Laurel to view new signage related to civil rights at the Lauren Municipal Pool and St. Marks. They reiterated their thanks for everyone's support.

Ms. Hughes commented that the bill would allow applicants receiving funding from the Maryland State Arts Council to be eligible for Museum Assistance Funding support.

Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Mr. Brandon Rosario discussed the premiere of a film called "Grandma's Hands," which is a story of the heritage and culture of our history as told through food and the way that it's been passed down between generations through grandma's hands. He stated that the premiere was a great success and gave a special thank you to Sec. Flora for attending. There has been a lot of follow-ups with interviews (with WJZ CBS News in Baltimore) and other news outlets. Mr. Rosario reminded everyone that this film was funded through MHAA grants. They are hoping there will be more showings of the film soon. He then shared a short video about the film.

Sec. Flora shared just how great the film was and how it connected to her own childhood and congratulated the team on their effort.

Mr. Rosario concluded with information about a Planning Forum on April 20 to discuss topics and themes as a national heritage area. He extended an invitation to everyone to join them at Historic Sotterley for the event.

Mr. Arvizu agreed to circulate the invitation after the meeting.

Sec. Flora asked if there is a central calendar of all of these events to keep track of everything.

Mr. Arvizu shared that there used to be something like this in the past, but it's been some time since one was in operation.

Sec. Flora suggested it was something to think about.

Adjourn

Sec. Flora thanked everyone for sharing these updates and stated how exciting these programs all look. She shared she would be at MML and MACO and looks forward to seeing folks there. She welcomed any closing thoughts or comments. Sec. Flora brought to everyone's attention that October 11 is Indigenous People's Weekend, and we might want to reconsider this date.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Newman and seconded by Mr. Leshner. The motion passed unanimously.