

**Minutes of the
One Hundred and Fifth Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
October 23, 2024**

The one hundred and fifth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened in Chestertown Maryland Harwood Nature Center at the Lawrence Wetlands Preserve on October 23, 2024 and was open to the public.

Authority Members/Designees Present

Secretary Rebecca M. Flora (MD Department of Planning and serving as the Chair 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); Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer); Pete Leshner (Maryland Association of Counties representative); Dennis Doster (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism); Peter Ramsey (representing MD State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury); Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld); Sandy Turner (Maryland Tourism Development Board representative); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative); Nathan Brown (Maryland Municipal League representative); Robert D. Campbell (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation and serving as the Vice Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority); Mary Anne Harms (Speaker of the House representative); Nicholas Redding (President of the Senate representative); Hilary Bell (representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz).

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Natalie Chabot (Maryland Greenways Commission representative); Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks); Geoffrey Newman (representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Secretary Sanjay Rai)

Staff Present

Ariane Hofstedt (Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Martha Waldron (Assistant Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Andrew Arvizu (Assistant Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Adam Snyder (Office of the Attorney General)

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Rebecca Flora called the meeting to order at 10:07 and thanked everyone for attending. She offered her thanks to Ms. Gail Owings, the executive director of the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area for hosting MHAA, as well as the staff of the Sultana Foundation for offering their venue for the meeting.

Mr. Andrew Arvizu conducted the roll call.

Ms. Owings thanked the authority for visiting her heritage area and discussed the historical significance of Chestertown. She highlighted the town's role as a hub for heritage tourism. In particular, she discussed the area around the Lawrence Wetlands Preserve, and she encouraged authority members to explore the city and visit the rest of the heritage area. She concluded by introducing Mariana Leshar, the CFO of the Lawrence Wetlands Preserves.

Ms. Leshar thanked the authority for attending and shared some of the background on the newly constructed Harwood Nature Center at Lawrence Wetlands Preserve.

Ms. Owings shared logistical information about the site.

Resolution R-100 to Approve Minutes from July 11, 2024 meeting Elizabeth, Sandy. Nick abstains, bob abstains.

Sec. Flora asked for comments on the minutes from the July 11th meeting of the Authority. She called for a motion to approve the minutes as they had been circulated. Ms. Elizabeth Hughes made the following motion, which Ms. Sandy Turner seconded.

The motion passed with Mr. Nicholas Redding and Mr. Bob Campbell abstaining.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the July 11, 2024, Minutes as presented.

MHAA Chairperson Report

Sec. Flora acknowledged receipt of the memo from the Maryland Heritage Area Coalition this past July regarding the 2018 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) that authorized annual use of \$300,000 of MHAA funds to MHT for the non-capital grant program. She explained that the agency is currently working to fix structural deficits, and the current fiscal climate is quite tight. She noted that MDP will be working to find a solution with the goal of not sacrificing the MHT non-capital program, but it will be ultimately determined by how this year's budget turns out.

Ms. Elizabeth Hughes concurred and hoped that the situation could be resolved.

Sec. Flora updated the authority on an Emergency Grant given to the Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance. This \$25,000 grant will support the acquisition of three historic rooms

that are original to Dorchester County and being sold by the Brooklyn Museum of Art. They are to be installed at the Handsell property, where they will be interpreted and open to the public.

Mr. Bob Campbell asked for an update on the auction of the historic rooms.

Ms. Ariane Hofstedt explained that the Brooklyn Museum pulled the rooms from auction, once they learned that the Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance was a serious bidder. The Museum will be gifting the rooms to the Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance for a nominal fee, to cover disassembly, storage, and shipping.

Sec. Flora and Mr. Campbell expressed their gratitude to the Brooklyn Museum for offering to support the Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance.

Sec. Flora then provided an update on the current membership of the Authority. She explained that there is still one vacant position, one of the two positions appointed by the President of the Maryland Senate. Additionally, the term of four members is ending. She explained that MHAA's bylaws state that members whose term has ended shall continue to serve until a replacement has been selected and then asked those members to affirm their ability and interest to do so.

Mr. Nicholas Redding, Ms. Mary Anne Harms, and Mr. Campbell all agreed to continue serving until a replacement is appointed by the Governor's Office. Ms. Natalie Chabot was not present at the meeting, but Ms. Hofstedt noted that she had consented to continuing to serve prior to the meeting.

Sec. Flora expressed that it is hard to let go of good people but it's also important to engage new voices in the Authority. In filling these positions, she hoped that new Authority members will bring new perspectives and expertise. She added that current members will most likely still be engaged with MHAA in some way even after their terms are up.

Action items

Resolution R-200 to Approve the Election of a Vice Chair

Sec. Flora explained that Mr. Campbell's term as Vice Chair of MHAA has ended. She thanked Mr. Campbell for his leadership and guidance through several major transitions, including navigating the Covid-19 pandemic and supporting the transfer of a new administration from the previous Secretary of the Maryland Department of Planning.

Sec. Flora called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair of MHAA.

Mr. Campbell nominated Ms. Melissa Archer. He highlighted her contributions to the Authority, and her willingness to support the Program's work. He noted that this would be a great opportunity for her growth as a professional, and that she would be a great candidate to replace him as Vice Chair. Confirmed that she is interested and willing to serve in this role.

Sec. Flora called for a motion to elect Ms. Archer as the Vice Chair of MHAA.

Ms. Liz Fitzsimmons made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Pete Leshner.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves a call for nominations and a motion to elect a Member to serve as Vice Chair of the Authority, pursuant to MHAA Bylaws, Article V, Section

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Resolution R-300 to Approve Completed Five-Year Action Plans

Sec. Flora noted that three heritage areas were requesting approval of their completed Five-Year Action Plans. She called on the Authority for questions about the plans, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Ms. Hughes noted that it was interesting that Montgomery County placed an emphasis on education and collaboration with the school system. She mentioned that this kind of collaboration is always challenging but felt that is it a worthy goal.

Mr. Leshner expressed appreciation for Montgomery's plan for the thematic work that they are doing. He shared that enthusiasm for the clearly defined objectives contained within the plan for Stories of the Chesapeake. He felt that the report clearly showed a great deal of thought and purpose

Sec. Flora noted the challenge of creating a Five-Year Action Plan, and how the process really makes an organization consider its future goals and purpose. She thanked heritage area directors for their hard work.

Sec. Flora called for a motion to approve all three Five-Year Action Plans.

Mr. Pete Leshner made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Mary Anne Harms:

RESOLVED, that at the requests of the following heritage areas, the Authority approves their Five-Year Action Plans for FY24 – FY28:

- Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area
- Heritage Montgomery Heritage Area
- Baltimore National Heritage Area

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Management Report

Ms. Hofstedt updated the Authority on the balance of the Financing Fund. In the briefing materials that were sent out prior to the meeting, the total available reserve funds listed in the summary report were \$193,269.70. Since then, the Executive Committee approved an Emergency Grant to the Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance which reduced the amount of reserve funds by \$25,000. Additionally, as per the resolution that was made at the July 11, 2024 meeting to cap the reserve funds at \$100,000, MHAA staff used the excess funds that were above the \$100,000 cap to award one grant on the FY2525 Reserve List in the amount of \$89,538. This grant went to the University of Maryland, Baltimore for the Historic Fountain Restoration at Donaldson Brown Center. When taking these two grants into account, and a few others that recently closed under budget, the current total available reserve funds in the Financing Fund is \$126,556.70.

Ms. Bridgette Cary thanked the Authority for implementing this process to fund reserve list grants and expressed her thanks that the Donaldson Brown Center grant would be moving forward.

Ms. Hofstedt called attention to the MHAA Grant Fact Sheet that was included in the briefing materials. Regarding the FY25 Grant Agreements, currently 75% of FY25 grants are out the door and first payments are in the process of being issued. This year, the first FY25 payment was received on September 6, within less than two months of approval, representing the fastest turn-around time for the Program in recent history. She explained that the newly refined system is working and making things far faster.

Sec. Flora and Mr. Leshner thanked the staff for their hard work.

Ms. Hughes thanked MDP's representatives with the Office of the Attorney General for their support in revising the grants process.

Ms. Hofstedt provided an update on the upcoming fiscal year, including key dates for the grant cycle and recruitment of new grants review panelists. The project grant deadline for FY26 will be March 3, 2025. She shared that the Program will be prioritizing grants that support the state's MD250 program by allotting two points on the scoring rubric to highlight this focus area.

Ms. Hofstedt noted that Management Grants in FY26 will be reviewed by MHAA Staff rather than Authority Members, at the recommendation of staff and previous management grant reviewers.

Sec. Flora encouraged Authority members and heritage area directors to meet with Michelle Johnson, the director of MD250 to better understand how their work fits in with the ongoing plans for the celebration.

Ms. Liz Shatto asked for clearer guidance on what constitutes the 250th.

Mr. Leshar encouraged the MHAA Program to align its definition of the 250th with the Governor's order.

Sec. Flora agreed on the need for clarity.

Ms. Hofstedt noted that there will be additional members on the grants review panel for FY26 and asked members of the Authority for recommendations. Currently there are around 5 positions to fill.

Mr. Redding asked if it was worth considering if the FY26 MHAA Management grants could be shortened and if the application process could be made easier for management entities.

Ms. Carty shared that a shorter application would be better from her perspective, but that she would need to meet with the Coalition to find consensus.

Ariane noted that the grant application has been paired back over the past two years, but work is still being done to simplify the process. For example, grant agreement for Management grants were revised this past year to be renewable for 5 years at a time, in line with the heritage areas' Five-Year Action Plans.

Ms. Fitzsimmons noted that there will most likely still need to be some type of annual application process, in accordance with state requirements.

Member Announcements/New Business

Ms. Hughes offered an update on the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Committee. She explained that the group is wrapping up their work next year and will be hosting several publicly accessible events across the state. She encouraged Authority members and heritage area directors to attend if possible.

Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition Report

Ms. Carty thanked Sec. Flora for addressing the memo that the Maryland Heritage Area Coalition sent in July 2024. She expressed gratitude to the MHT and MHAA staff for all the work they had done making sure the concerns of the Coalition had been heard. She shared that the Coalition is already planning to advocate for the coming legislative session, and she requested a breakdown of administrative expenses to be used as part of the advocacy work.

Sec. Flora asked if it is possible to provide this breakdown and Ms. Hofstedt confirmed that a report on administrative expenses could be shared.

Sec. Flora asked members of the Coalition for highlights.

Dee Dee Ritchie, the executive director of the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area (PWPHA) presented Sec. Flora with a shirt commemorating the planning of the upcoming River

Park at Canal Place. She updated the Authority on progress towards the Park, noting that an RFP for work on the park will be going out within the week. Finally, she explained that PWPCHA will be submitting their Five-Year Action Plan in December 2024 for approval at the January 2025 MHAA meeting.

Ms. Emily Heubner, the director of operations at the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area updated the Authority on programming at the Newcomer House at Antietam National Battlefield. She encouraged Authority members to attend the heritage area's annual Year-in-Review on November 12 at 6:00pm in Hagerstown. Finally, she highlighted the upcoming opening of the National Road Museum in Boonsboro, which has been the recipient of many MHAA grants.

Mx. Meagan Baco updated the Authority on the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area's partnership with the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation, noting the addition of two new full time temporary staff thru that program. They noted several upcoming events, including the approval of the Battle of Bladensburg National Register nomination and the opening of the Trolley Rail Line 82 Trail which will connect several past MHAA grantees.

Dr. Carol Benson, the executive director of the Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area (CCHA), updated the Authority on several upcoming anniversaries in her heritage area, including the 64th anniversary of the sit in by the Annapolis 5, the 25th anniversary of the Kunta Kinte – Alex Haley Foundation, and the 200th anniversary of Lafayette's final tour of the US. She announced her upcoming retirement on December 31st and expressed her pleasure in working with the Authority and the Coalition over the years. She thanked Ms. Hughes for her mentorship and leadership and explained that she has come to learn the importance of heritage in making history accessible to the public, and empowering communities. She shared that the transformation of the Program over her 25 years of service has been positive, and she encouraged all parties involved to keep up the good work.

The Authority thanked Dr. Benson for her service.

Mr. Tim Lehey, the President of the Board of CCHA, thanked Dr. Benson for her service and expressed that it will be very hard to replace her exceptional presence.

Sec. Flora thanked Dr. Benson for her service and noted that she will be leaving an incredible legacy of work.

Adjourn

Sec. Flora thanked the Authority and Coalition for their hard work. She called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Leshner made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mary Anne Harms.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:16.