

**Minutes of the
One Hundred and Eighth Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
April 10, 2025**

The one hundred and eighth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened virtually on April 10, 2025. The public had the opportunity to listen/watch via live- stream and sign up for public comment.

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 and serving as the Vice Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority); Luis Cardona (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr.); Sandy Turner (Maryland Tourism Development Board representative); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative); Robert D. Campbell (Governor’s Appointee for Historic Preservation); Nicholas Redding (President of the Senate representative); Hilary Bell (representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz); Dennis Doster (Governor’s Appointee for Heritage Tourism); Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Pete Leshar (Maryland Association of Counties representative); Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld); Nathan Brown (Maryland Municipal League representative); Mary Anne Harms (Speaker of the House representative); Geoffrey Newman (representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Secretary Sanjay Rai); Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks); Peter Ramsey (representing MD State Superintendent Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.)

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); Nell Ziehl (Chief, Office of Planning, Education and Outreach, Maryland Historical Trust); Rieyn DeLony (Deputy Principal Counsel, Office of the Attorney General)

Call to Order

Secretary Rebecca Flora started the meeting at 1:02 PM. She welcomed the Authority to the meeting and instructed Mr. Arvizu to conduct roll call.

Mr. Andrew Arvizu conducted the roll call.

Regarding membership on the Authority, Sec. Flora introduced three members that were in attendance and would be officially joining the Authority soon: Lawana Holland-Moore, Chief Donna Abbot, and Tara Balfe Clifford. They have been confirmed by the Senate and are awaiting their approval letters from the Governor's Appointments Office and to be sworn in. Sec. Flora also noted that Luis Cardona, has replaced Liz Fitzsimmons serving as proxy for Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr. It was also mentioned that Nicholas Redding was reappointment for another term in his current position. Sec. Flora allowed each new member to introduce themselves and then thanked all of the members for their service, including Bob Campbell and Mary Anne Harms who were eligible to vote at the meeting because their replacements are not yet official, but will most likely not be at the next meeting. Mr. Redding and Mr. Cardona were also eligible to vote as continuing and proxy representatives respectfully.

Approval of Minutes

Resolution R-100 to Approve Minutes from the January 9, 2025, meeting

Sec. Flora asked for comments on the meeting minutes from the January 9th meeting. Seeing no amendments, she called for a motion to approve.

Mr. Bob Campbell made the following motion and which Ms. Melissa Archer Second. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the January 9, 2025, Minutes as presented.

Resolution R-200 to Approve Minutes from the February 13, 2025, meeting

Sec. Flora asked for comments on the meeting minutes from the February 13th meeting. Seeing no comments, she called for a vote.

Mr. Campbell made the following motion, which Mr. Nickolas Redding seconded. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the February 13, 2025, Minutes as presented.

Management Report

Sec. Flora called on Ms. Ariane Hofstedt to present the management report.

Financing Fund

Ms. Hofstedt explained that there is currently \$142,143.80 in the MHAA Financing Fund. She explained the status of the reserve list and explained that the Financing Fund will remain over the \$100,000 cap until the next reserve list grant can be funded. Additionally, she shared that there is \$75,000 in the Emergency Fund for Fiscal Year 2025. These funds will move over into the Reserve Fund at the end of this fiscal year.

FY25 and FY26 Grant Updates

Ms. Hofstedt updated the panel on the status of the FY26 Grant Round. She explained that 179 applications were received, totaling an ask of over \$9.7 million. She also highlighted the upcoming review period that is underway at both the local and state levels, noting that Authority members will be receiving the list of funding recommendation on June 13. They will have until June 26th to review the list and send any comments or questions to Maryland Heritage Areas Program (the Program) staff prior to the July 10 MHAA meeting where final funding decisions will be made.

Marketing Grant Amendments

Ms. Hofstedt shared that the proposed changes to FY26 marketing grants that were included in the Grants Fact Sheet will not be moving forward at this time, as more information is required before proceeding.

ATHA Boundary Amendment

Ms. Hofstedt shared that on April 7, 2025, Anacostia Trails Heritage Area submitted their documentation to request a county-wide amendment to the boundary of their heritage area. Ms. Hofstedt shared that the required public hearing will be on May 6th and the Authority will be asked to vote on the proposal at the special MHAA Meeting on May 15th.

Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition Report

Ms. Lucille Walker welcomed the new members to the Authority and discussed the role of the Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition. Ms. Walker highlighted the advocacy role that the Coalition played in securing SB980 this past legislative session that holds the potential for additional funding for MHAA in future years. She expressed excitement that these funds will be able to support the large number of grants that go unfunded each year. She noted that the Coalition protects the funding of the Program

each year. Additionally, she explained that the intent of the recently passed legislation is to empower the Authority to make more choices in terms of grant sizes and match requirements.

Ms. Walker discussed the conference attendance and advocacy that the Coalition performs around the country. She highlighted that Maryland is one of only two states with a state-based heritage area program. She shared that the Coalition will be attending all of the major conferences of the region.

Ms. Brigitte Carty added that this recently passed piece of legislation involved hundreds of people engaging in advocacy. She thanked the Authority for its support and welcomed the new members.

Ms. Walker stated that there are lingering questions about the Strategic Plan.

Heritage Area Director Highlights

Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area

Ms. Dee Dee Ritchie updated the Authority on the layout and status of the heritage area. She discussed the River Park at Canal Place, including the early testing and work that has gone into the process. She additionally discussed the upcoming Boundary Amendment that will grow the heritage area to be county wide. She highlighted some of the great sites included in the proposed expansion.

Lower Susquehanna Heritage Area

Ms. Carty discussed the foundation of her heritage area and highlighted some of the great partnerships that her organization has built within the area. She introduced a video designed in conjunction with Vulcan Materials Company, that highlights how they worked in partnership to provide an easement around the Havre de Grace quarry for a contiguous 38-mile trail system that the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway has been working on as part of the growing trail network in the region.

Ms. Carty discussed the 25th annual River Sweep. Over the last 25 years, this event has removed 131 tons debris from the Susquehanna waterways.

Baltimore National Heritage Area

Ms. Daniels provided an update on the status of the Baltimore National Heritage Area as it pertained to Federal funding levels. She noted that funds have not been disbursed, and the award size of BNHA's Federal award is 53% less than last year. While the operational budget is still intact, this will make things more difficult for project grantees, who had relied on federal dollars to assist with state matching requirements.

Ms. Daniels spoke to the importance of MHAA funding to support BNHA's operations.

Ms. Daniels highlighted upcoming projects, including signage in Baltimore highlighting a historic sit-in as well as highway signs that highlight the Baltimore National Heritage Area. Finally, Ms. Daniels highlighted two films: *Obscured Legacy: Baltimore's Forgotten Heroes* and *In Freedom's Name*. She noted that African American history is being targeted and encouraged other heritage areas to run these films and share them to the broader public.

MHAA Chairperson Report

Update on 2025 Legislation

Sec. Flora updated the Authority on the status of the 2025 legislation impacting the Program. She noted that a number of bills, including SB980, are yet to be signed by Governor Moore. She added that this year has been challenging due to the budget. In particular, the Maryland Historical Trust has suffered some notable reductions, and the Maryland Department of Planning is awaiting final word on the extent of the cuts facing their department. More information should be available by the May 15th MHAA special meeting.

Executive Committee Update

Sec. Flora reported that the Executive Committee met on March 20 to review the draft Strategic Plan (the Plan). She noted that this working meeting highlighted the need for additional time to comment on the plan so will not be asking for the Authority to vote on the plan right now. The Plan will be discussed during today's meeting, but the final vote will take place at a special MHAA meeting that is scheduled for the May 15th.

Public Comment

Liz Shatto

Ms. Shatto provided detailed comments on the draft Strategic Plan, requesting that the plan note the financial benefits of tax credits and loans, and that the organizational chart be refined for greater accuracy. She asked that reference to "local review process" be further defined. She questions the number of times the Coordinating Team met, and asked that the intent of the fundraising strategy be made clear. She also suggested including "study and analyze" to the metric strategy and commented on the definitions of MHAA and the Coalition in the glossary. Ms. Shatto asked that the Coalition be allowed to engage more directly with the Authority. She concluded noting that to relegate director comments to the constraints of the meeting's public comment section is inconsistent with the values described in the plan, and is not conducive with relationship building across the program.

Lucille Walker

Ms. Walker concurred with Ms. Shatto. She shared that the strategic planning process has felt rushed to the Coalition and expressed concern about how the Plan will be helpful to the Program. She highlighted the programmatic role and unique differences of all 13 heritage areas and the need to make the Plan as impactful as possible. She asked for clarity on where heritage tourism is being included in the Plan and how Authority members will be participating. Ms. Walker also mentioned that “Grandma’s Hands” is playing on MPT/PBS on Saturday April 13 at 3:00 and available online via the app, also asked to do a series.

Brandon Rosario

Mr. Brandon Rosario concurred with Lucille Walker’s comments and expressed concern about directors being relegated to being members of the public during MHAA meetings. He worried that questions may go unanswered if heritage area directors are not on the call. He feels partnership needs to be a major priority moving forward.

Lisa Challenger

Ms. Challenger concurred with Ms. Shatto’s comment regarding the definition of the Coalition being too short.

Brigitte Carty

Ms. Carty noted that many heritage areas have been certified for over 20 years. She explained that the Program is strongest when the Coalition and Authority work together. She appreciates being able to give heritage area highlights during the Authority meetings called on more opportunities and time for meaningful interaction between the heritage areas and the Authority.

Meg Baco

Mx. Meg Baco introduced their county-wide boundary expansion. They noted that this expansion will reduce barriers to accessing program benefits in Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. Mx. Baco explained that the definition of the Coalition that is in the draft Strategic Plan came from the Coalition’s website which will be updated and shared so it can be included in the final version of the Plan. Mx. Baco noted that among the Coalition, there is such a breadth of information and passion that goes into the work of the heritage area directors, including representing the program to other groups outside of the Coalition like the Maryland Museums Association. As an example, they mentioned how MMA has been successful in bringing back the Museum Assistance Program, which should be receiving FY26 funding as a result of this legislative session. Mx. Baco ended by stating that the heritage area directors are a powerhouse as individuals and collectively as the Coalition.

Mr. Redding suggested that if during public comment Authority members could ask questions that it might be helpful. Ms. DeLony from OAG noted that is not required by law.

Action items

Ms. Martha Waldron discussed the following three requests for amendments to project grants.

Resolution R-300 to Approve a Request by Susquehannock Wildlife Society to convert use of its FY 2024 Capital Grant for the “Parking Area and Standby Generator for Opening of Wildlife Center” to support additional costs related to Grantee’s FY23 MHAA Non Capital Grant for the Wildlife Center Exhibit installation.

Ms. Waldron discussed an amendment request from the Susquehannock Wildlife Society. She explained the original scope of the project and explained that the grantee is requesting to transition this grant from capital work to non-capital work.

Mr. Scott McDaniel with the Susquehannock Wildlife Society noted that securing funding to support capital work has been very difficult, and funding priorities have had to shift to accommodate this change. He noted that finishing this non-capital work will be required to utilize the proposed capital work of the original scope.

Sec. Flora called for comment and motion.

Ms. Elizabeth Hughes made the following motion and Ms. Sandy Turner seconded. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves Grantee’s request to convert Grantee’s match and its FY 2024 \$38,268.37 Capital Grant (Wildlife Center Parking Area and Standby Generator project) to support additional costs necessary to complete Grantee’s FY 2023 Non Capital Grant for the Wildlife Center Exhibit Installation project, including costs for exhibit building materials for local wildlife exhibits, exhibit signage, and outdoor visitor orientation signage.

Resolution R-400 to Approve a Request by Working Out Wonders Foundation to convert use of its FY 2024 Capital Grant for the “Carroll Farmhouse and Cemetery Preservation Project Phase II” to support non capital project costs for Grantee’s new traveling exhibit interpreting the history of Nanjemoy, MD.

Ms. Waldron introduced an amendment request from the Working Out Wonders Foundation. She explained that the original grant was for capital work on the Carroll Farmhouse and Cemetery. Sadly, the

site was determined to be beyond rehabilitation. The amendment would allow the grantee to perform non-capital work to highlight the historical site, despite the physical challenges associated with a physical restoration the historic site.

Rev. Ruby Thomas with the Working Out Wonders Foundation discussed the history of the project and the justification for the amendment. She explained the discovery of a burial site for enslaved people, starting physical restoration, and the development of interpretation. She discussed all of the challenges associated with restoring the site. She expressed a strong determination to protect the story of this site.

Mr. Redding made the following motion, which Ms. Turner seconded. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves Grantee’s request to convert Grantee’s match and its FY 2024 \$90,000 Capital Grant (Carroll Farmhouse and Cemetery Preservation Project Phase II) to support non capital project costs to create a traveling exhibit that interprets the history of Nanjemoy, Maryland, including costs for signature boards, an educational website, seminars/literature/demonstrations, and construction of a replica of the Carroll Farmhouse.

Resolution R-500 to Approve a Request by Annapolis Maritime Museum to Amend the Scope of Work of the FY 2024 Non Capital Grant for “Master Planning and Inclusive Interpretation” to allow use of a portion of the Grant for capital costs to implement the planning design.

Mr. Arvizu introduced the grant amendment request from the Annapolis Maritime Museum and explained that the original scope of the project had been completed under budget. As the implementation plan that was funded by the grant has been completed, the museum is requesting to use the remaining \$18,753 to start implementing some of the work proposed in the plan. Mr. Arvizu introduced staff members from the museum to take questions from the Authority.

Ms. Alice Estrada, the President of the Museum thanked MHAA for its support. She explained that the first step of implementing the planning will be landscaping. She discussed the future of the project.

Mr. Redding made the following motion and Ms. Hughes seconded. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves Grantee’s request to use a portion of Grantee’s match and a \$18,753 portion of its FY 2024 Non Capital Grant (Consulting Fees for Master Planning and Inclusive

Interpretation) to support capital project expenses to implement components of the plan, including bed delineation, grading, and a partial installation and procurement of native plants.

Discussion Items

Presentation and Discussion of Draft Strategic Plan

Sec. Flora discussed the draft Strategic Plan that was shared with Authority members ahead of time along with comments from heritage area directors and fellow Authority members. She reminded everyone that she would not be asking for a vote on the Strategic Plan today and went over the steps of the planning process and timeline that has been completed over the last year. She also reminded everyone that different methods were used leading up to the final draft of the Plan and explained that all stakeholders have had many opportunities for participation and to provide feedback. She thanked Due East Partners, and everyone involved in this work. To frame the conversation, she laid out the core elements of the Strategic Plan that the Authority will be asked to approve: Vision, Purpose, Priorities, Strategies, Results, and Guiding Principles. Sec. Flora also noted that there will also be a separate Implementation Plan that will be completed at another time.

Sec. Flora introduced the draft Maryland Heritage Areas Program Strategic Plan “A Statewide Vision for Success July 2025-June 2032.” She explained that having a plan in place is one of the responsibilities of the Authority as the governance body overseeing the Program. She then went over each page of the draft Plan allowing time for Authority members to ask holistic questions and provide feedback. At the end, Sec. Flora called on each Authority member to provide final comments, noted below.

Dr. Dennis Doster thanked Due East for helping us navigate through this process.

Mr. Bob Campbell acknowledged his discomfort with the pace of today’s presentation and that it has been hard to provide enough time for Authority members to comment on items in the plan during the meeting and gain full concurrence. He agreed with the priorities and strategies, but encouraged the Authority to consider how these priorities will be addressed on an annual basis taking varying funds into mind. He also noted that, in the interest of the principle of collaboration, he would like to address the concerns of the Coalition regarding future opportunities for collaboration. Mr. Campbell concluded by saying he did appreciate the extra time that has been given for the Authority to review the draft Plan.

Ms. Sandy Turner appreciated the synthesis of comments that was done for the many parties that participated. She noted that this provided a helpful lens during her review for ensuring that feedback has been incorporated into the Plan.

Ms. Hughes expressed an appreciation for the performance of Due East's work. She felt they did a really good job distilling down a large volume of information into recommendations. She emphasized how helpful it is to have an org chart but would like to look at it again to ensure it captures the relationships of the different entities.

Ms. Hillary Bell had no comments.

Mr. Luis Cardona commended the Plan's emphasis on DEIA to help ensure our history is being told completely.

Ms. Archer explained that after comparing the new Plan with the previous plan in 2010, both plans are very different. She commended Due East for synthesizing all of the information collected and condensing it into a digestible format that is easy to read. She agrees with everything in the proposed new Plan and noted that the language in the Plan seems to conform to the discussion that the Authority has held that she was a part of. She looks forward to seeing what comes next with the Implementation Plan.

Sec. Flora noted that one more set of revisions will be made to the Strategic Plan, taking comments from today into consideration. A final version will be sent to Authority members with changes highlighted prior to the May 15 special MHAA meeting where we will be asking for approval.

Update on Implementation Plan

Sec. Flora noted that, after the Strategic Plan is approved, an Implementation Plan will follow, to lay out tactics to implement and indicators to measure success of the Strategic Plan starting in FY26. The Implementation Plan will be based largely on information already gathered by Due East and the rest will be driven by Program staff at the state level, in coordination with the Executive Committee and assessed annually. The Executive Committee will determine action items that need to be brought to the Authority for discussion.

Mr. Campbell thanked Sec. Flora for this clarification. He noted that many of the comments from the Coalition were better directed at the Implementation Plan than the Strategic Plan.

New Business and Member Announcements

Sec. Flora asked for new business and/or member announcements. There were none. She reminded the group that there will be a special meeting on May 15 from 2:30-4:00, virtually.

Adjourn

Sec. Flora thanked the Authority and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Campbell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which Ms. Archer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 PM.