

**Minutes of the
One Hundred and Tenth Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
July 10, 2025**

The one hundred and tenth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened virtually on July 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); Sandy Turner (Maryland Tourism Development Board representative); 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); Pete Leshner (Maryland Association of Counties representative); Nathan Brown (Maryland Municipal League representative); Geoffrey Newman (representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Secretary Sanjay Rai); Lawana Holland-Moore (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation); Chief Donna Abbott (President of the Senate representative); Peter Ramsey (representing MD State Superintendent Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Luis Cardona (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr.); Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative); Tara Balfe Clifford (Speaker of the House representative); Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld)

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); Adam Snyder (Principal Counsel, Office of the Attorney General)

Call to Order

Secretary Rebecca Flora called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.
Ms. Martha Waldron conducted the roll call.

Approval of Minutes from April 10, 2025 and May 15, 2025 MHAA Meetings

Resolution R-100 to Approve Minutes from April 10, 2025 meeting

Secretary Flora asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the April 10th meeting as presented. Elizabeth Hughes made the following motion, which was seconded Sandy Turner. The motion passed unanimously.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the April 10, 2025 Minutes as presented.

Resolution R-200 to Approve Minutes from May 15, 2025 meeting

Secretary Flora asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the May 15th special meeting as presented. Geoffrey Newman made the following motion, which was seconded Sandy Turner. The motion passed unanimously.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the May 15, 2025 Minutes as presented.

MHAA Chairperson Report

Secretary Flora shared that a FY25 emergency grant request was approved by the MHAA Executive Committee awarding \$11,380 to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The following resolution was approved on June 23, 2025. Because of how close the approval was to the end of the fiscal year it will be processed as soon as possible in FY26.

Resolution R-100 FY25 Emergency Grant Request from Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

RESOLVED, that the MHAA Executive Committee approves the request for MHAA Emergency Grant funding to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum for \$11,380. The grant is to complete an architectural and engineering assessment of Hooper Strait Lighthouse that is currently located at 213 N Talbot St., St. Michaels, MD 21663 and all other eligible costs shown in the MHAA project budget. These expenses are to be funded with FY 2025 MHAA emergency grant funds. All eligible expenses may be covered by the grant and required matching funds.

Secretary Flora also mentioned that an emergency grant request was received from Monocacy National Battlefield to cover the costs of 1-3 temporary personnel whose federal funding has been cut. The Executive Committee did a preliminary review of this request and voted not to invite them for full application because it did not meet the intent of the emergency grant policy. However, it shines light on the impact of federal funding cuts on the heritage areas, and she wants the Authority to consider this as decisions are made about the reserve fund or if there are other proactive measures that could be taken

Secretary Flora reminded the Authority that the final Maryland Heritage Areas Program Strategic Plan that was approved by the Authority on May 15, 2025 and has been shared publicly. The Plan is active as of July 1, 2025 for FY26–FY32. It is intended that Program staff

and the Authority will revisit and assess the plan every few years to ensure it remains relevant and useful.

Management Report

Ms. Hofstedt shared that the Implementation Plan will articulate the actions that will be used to fulfill the strategies that were approved in the Strategic Plan to include specific tactics, responsibilities, timelines, and resources needed. It serves as a roadmap to guide day-to-day efforts, track progress, and ensure accountability through progress indicators and performance measures.

Working off of the feedback that was captured during the planning process, MHAA Program staff and Due East have completed a first draft of the Implementation Plan. We have another meeting with them next week to make some additional refinements and will then send a final draft to the MHAA Executive Committee for review. The Implementation Plan will be presented to the Authority at the October 2025 meeting and will be used to ensure the Strategic Plan is fulfilling the priorities and results that we want to accomplish.

Ms. Hofstedt reported that the financing fund report that was included with the briefing materials sent to Authority members showed \$186,505.30 in the Reserve Fund. MDP is still closing out FY25 to include a final reconciliation of MHAA's Financing Fund. Final FY25 numbers will be reported at the next Authority meeting. One thing to note, is that there is \$75,000 in unspent emergency grant funds from FY25 that will roll over to FY26.

She also noted that per the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) of 2025, \$340,000 from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority annual allocation was set aside for the purchase of a new grants management software system. The current contract is set to expire in the coming year. As a result, there were \$340,000 less to go towards funding grants this year.

Ms. Waldron reported that in May, one grant from the FY25 reserve list was awarded to Historic Annapolis in the amount of \$18,750 for an "Enhancing Cultural Understanding: Interpretive Materials and Video Translation" project. This was the result of the Town of Sharpsburg declining their FY25 grant for the Maryland/Big Spring Masonry Restoration project.

Ms. Waldron reminded the Authority that the next MHAA meeting will be taking place in person in Cumberland, MD, in the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area from 10:00-3:00. Authority members are eligible for one night hotel stay. We will be sending out details about how to reserve rooms. Please RSVP so we can get accurate number for train ride.

Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition Report

Ms. Lucille Walker, co-chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition, shared that the heritage areas participate in a number of state-wide outreach efforts, including having a presence at the recent Maryland Municipal League summer conference and the upcoming Maryland Association of Counties summer conference.

Ms. Walker requested that the Coalition have an active role in the Authority meetings, beyond the Coalition Report and Heritage Area Director Highlights, and believes heritage area directors should not have to sign up for Public Comment so they can be available for any questions or comments throughout the meeting. She also questioned the order of the agenda, wondering why the Public Comment period is before Action Items.

Ms. Walker expressed that the Coalition would have liked to have had time to discuss the questions asked in the recently distributed Grant Matching and Funding Cap Requirements survey.

Ms. Walker also expressed the Coalition's interest in being involved in the Strategic Plan's Implementation Plan.

Finally, Ms. Walker shared that the coalition is in conversation with legislators about the upcoming Maryland General Assembly about pre-file options and stated that they would like to work directly with the Authority on any legislation that is put forward that might include the possibility of requesting additional funding, raising the appropriation, and adjusting the cap on grant levels. She requested that similarly, if the Maryland Department of Planning has legislative plans, that they collaborate and share them with the Coalition.

Ms. Brigitte Carty, co-chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition, asked how the heritage area directors will be involved in the development of the Strategic Plan's Implementation Plan.

Secretary Flora asked Program staff to follow up about these details after the meeting.

Ms. Carty reaffirmed the role of heritage area directors as core program partners and shared that the Maryland Heritage Areas Program was established as a collaborative community-based model where heritage areas served as important implementors and strategic partners in advancing the goals of the Authority. She provided background on how the Coalition has been involved in Authority meetings in the past and expressed that the new meeting structure presents a barrier to meaningful engagement. She respectfully requested that the Coalition be restored as active partners in the meeting, allowing them to engage in discussion, not just Public Comment.

Mr. Redding suggested that one solution to address the Coalition's concerns would be to instate them as ex-officio members of the Authority, without the ability to vote, but with access to fully participate in the meeting. He asked for more information about why the meeting format has shifted.

Secretary Flora replied that the changes to the meeting structure were put in place to help her better manage the Authority meetings, ensuring that the Authority's fiduciary responsibilities, discussions, and approvals are fulfilled. It is not a policy. A conversation ensued about the meeting structure.

Public Comment

Lucille Walker, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Ms. Walker once again noted the placement of the Public Comment on the agenda, saying that it doesn't allow folks to comment on the Action Items later in the meeting.

Kim Folk, Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area

Ms. Folk reiterated the importance of the heritage area directors being accessible.

Liz Shatto, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Ms. Shatto asked that heritage area directors be informed when an MHAA grantee in their heritage area has declined a grant, ideally before their decision is made. She also expressed that the loan option offered by the Program isn't well represented in the Strategic Plan and should be recognized in the Implementation Plan.

Ms. Shatto asked why a BRFA that reduces available grant funds by \$340,000 pursued when there is a substantial balance of unspent operating funds carried over from previous years. Even if that balance falls short of the need, the Program could have supported more project grants if some of the funding for new software had come from that fund balance. She also mentioned that since Maryland Heritage Areas Program isn't the only program that uses the software, it seems unreasonable for MHAA to bear the full cost.

Ms. Shatto indicated that HCWHA will evaluate and reconsider their local grant review process as soon as possible. However, revisiting the local process must occur in light of any anticipated changes to grant review at the State level. She requested the timeline for when any State-level changes will be made.

Ms. Shatto is pleased that the Museum Assistance Program (MAP) has been reinstated and funded, although modestly. She commended Meagan Baco for their leadership and advocacy. This is important to MHAA because as MAP grows, it may impact the heritage areas' priorities. These are complimentary grant programs that are both important. The same is true of the MHT Non-Capital Historic Preservation grant program and Ms. Shatto suggested that a grassroots campaign on behalf of that program may be affected and added that the MHT area representatives might be a source of leadership for such campaign. Ms. Shatto said she would do her part to support a campaign for funding this program if that were to be pursued. MHT and MHAA are aligned, but they are not the same and the MHT non-capital grants should not be funded at the expense of the MHAA budget. This year's highly competitive grant round made that very clear.

She closed by sharing that until recently, heritage area directors participated fully in MHAA meetings and is concerned by the limited access, which she believes to be contrary to the principles of the newly adopted Strategic Plan.

Secretary Flora thanked those who signed up for Public Comment and noted that the BRFA recommendation for the grants software was made outside of any recommendation from MDP or MHT -- it was an administrative decision.

Ms. Hughes commented on the placement of the Public Comment on the agenda, stating she feels it is helpful to have the comments prior to Action Items as it gives the Authority the opportunity to hear various points of view before voting.

Action Items

Regarding MHT's Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program, Secretary Flora referenced the memo that was included in the briefing materials sent to the Authority from Elizabeth Hughes, Director of the Maryland Historical Trust, explaining the history and use of this program.

She explained that for the past seven years, there has been a transfer of up to \$300,000 in MHAA funds to MHT's Non-Capital Grant Program. However, after checking with legal counsel, it was made clear that the Authority has the ability to determine this and ultimately decide if the \$300,000 should be allocated to MHT's Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program.

A discussion ensued about the MHT Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program and the importance of the program's focus for funding survey, documentation, and research of historic properties. Authority members recognized that this is a challenging conversation and decision given the current funding landscape and the impact these grants have across the state.

Mr. Redding asked if the Coalition has a position on this.

Ms. Shatto shared that the Coalition's position would be consistent with what was reflected in the SB980 legislation that was put forward in the 2025 legislative session: to stop the allocation of MHAA funds to the MHT Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program.

Ms. Shatto and Ms. Carty also shared that the Authority was blindsided by the BRFA that originally allocated these funds from MHAA to MHT.

The Authority continued their discussion.

Secretary Flora asked if anyone on the Authority wanted to make a motion.

Mr. Leshner made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Brown.

Mr. Redding suggested adding an amendment – or an encouragement – to include language crediting MHAA for their support in awarding the MHT Historic Preservation Non-Capital program. Mr. Leshner and Mr. Brown accepted this suggestion.

The motion passed with Ms. Hughes, Secretary Flora, and Mr. Redding abstaining.

Resolution R-300 Distribution of up to \$300,000 to the Maryland Historical Trust to be awarded as Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grants

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the distribution of \$300,000 from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund to the Maryland Historical Trust to be awarded as FY 2026 Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grants pursuant to Natural Resources Article § 5-903(a)(1)(ii), which provides “(ii) Of the amount transferred under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, up to \$300,000 may be distributed to the Maryland Historical Trust within the Department of Planning to be awarded as noncapital historic preservation grants.”

Secretary Flora thanked the Authority and shared that even though the allocation has been happening automatically in previous years, this decision will be voted on annually moving forward. With this approval, Resolution R-400 to Award an Additional Amount up to \$300,000 of MHAA Funds to FY 2026 Grants was moot and did not get voted on.

Ms. Hofstedt said that similar to last year, the Authority is being asked to vote on if they want to cap the amount of funds in the Reserve Fund and allow the excess to be distributed to reserve list grants. Last year it was capped at \$100,000. The same amount is being proposed for FY26, but the Authority may want to have a discussion about increasing the cap so more funds can accumulate in the Reserve Fund in case MHAA wants to create a new mechanism (similar to COVID-19 Emergency Grants) outside of our current emergency grants structure to address the growing needs of our heritage area partners that are being impacted by the federal funding cuts.

Mr. Leshner made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Archer. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution R-500 to Approve a Not-to-Exceed Cap on the Reservation of Unspent Prior Year Emergency and Grant Funds Available for FY 2026

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves setting a not-to-exceed amount of \$100,000 for the reserve funds in the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund for FY 2026 (the “Reserve Funds Cap”). The reserve funds are comprised of (i) cancelled or unspent prior years’ grant funds returned to MHAA, and (ii) unspent reserved emergency funds from prior fiscal years (together, the “Reserve Funds”). Reserve Funds do not include FY 2026 emergency funds in the amount of \$100,000 approved by the Authority under Resolution R-200 at its meeting on January 19, 2025.

Secretary Flora said that if the Authority votes to have a Reserve Fund Cap then the following resolution is needed to determine that the excess funds would go towards grants on the Reserve List and that MHAA Program staff are allowed to expedite processing additional grants from the reserve list as money accumulates from unspent funds from previous year’s grants.

Mr. Leshar made the following motion, which Ms. Turner seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution R-600 to Approve Applying Excess Reserve Funds to the FY 2026 Reserve List Grants

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the use of Reserve Funds that exceed the Reserve Funds Cap approved in Resolution R-500 at its meeting on July 10, 2025 to fund the grants designated as the FY 2026 “Reserve List Grants” on the 2026 Chart, in the order in which they appear in the chart. If the amount of the Reserve Funds exceeding the Reserve Funds Cap is less than the amount of the next Reserve List Grant shown on the 2026 Chart then, at the discretion of the MHAA Program staff, Reserve List Grants 1) may be awarded in a different order than shown in the 2026 Chart; or 2) may be awarded to partially fund projects; or (3) may not be awarded to allow funds to accumulate until the next Reserve List Grant shown on the 2026 Chart is able to be fully funded.

Ms. Hofstedt provided a brief overview of the FY26 grants review process.

Mr. Arvizu introduced Resolution R-700.

Mr. Leshar made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Redding. The motion passed with Ms. Turner abstaining.

Resolution R-700 to Approve FY 2026 Management, Marketing and Block Grants to Management Entities of Certified Heritage Areas (collectively referred to as the “Resolution R-700 Grants”)

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves funding for Resolution R-700 Grants consisting of thirteen management grants, six marketing grants, and thirteen block grants to the management entities of Certified Heritage Areas, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2026 Chart, for the management, marketing, and distribution of mini grants within heritage areas, including Anacostia Trails, Chesapeake Crossroads, Baltimore National, Beach to Bay, Canal Place (Passages of the Western Potomac), Heart of Chesapeake Country, Heart of the Civil War, Lower Susquehanna, Montgomery County, Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West, Patapsco Valley, Southern Maryland National, and Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Areas.

Mr. Arvizu introduced Mr. Kevin McDonald, Chair of the MHAA Grants Review Panel, who provided an overview of the panel’s discussions and decisions regarding the capital and non-capital project grants that are recommended for funding.

Secretary Flora and Ms. Hofstedt thanked Mr. McDonald for his service over the last six years and excellent leadership in his role as chair of the panel over the last four years. Per MHAA's policy, his term will be ending as of this year.

Mr. Leshner made the following motion, which Ms. Holland-Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution R-800 to Approve FY 2026 Capital and Non-Capital Project Grants (collectively referred to as the "Resolution R-800 Grants") with an amended number of capital and non-capital grants to accurately reflect that five capital and six non-capital grants are listed separately in R-900a-c.

RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Area Authority approves funding of Resolution R-800 Grants consisting of (i) 17 capital projects; and (ii) 31 non-capital project grants for projects and activities within the Certified Heritage Areas, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2026 Chart. These grants do not include the grants approved separately pursuant to Resolutions R-900a through R-900c.

The next resolution was introduced reflecting grants that needed to be voted on separately due to the recusals of Authority members. Ms. Archer made the following motions, which Ms. Holland-Moore seconded. The motion passed with Mr. Redding abstaining from R-900a, Ms. Turner abstaining from R-900b, and Mr. Leshner abstaining from R-900c.

Resolutions R-900a through R-900c to Approve FY 2026 Grants Requiring Recusal of Authority Members with Conflicts of Interest (collectively, the "Separately Approved Grants")

Resolution R-900a: RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to (i) Preservation Maryland for the "Historic Trades Workshops in Southern Maryland" project; (ii) Howard County, Maryland for the "Howard County Historic Courthouse Legacy Exhibit" project; (iii) Washington College for the "Art+Community+History: Creating a Landmark Together" and "Chesapeake Heartland Project: Humanities Van" projects; and (iv) Washington County Historical Trust, Inc. for the "Saylor House in Kiwanis Park: Restoration & Reuse, Phase 7" project under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2026 Chart. (Recused: Mr. Redding)

Resolution R-900b: RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to the (i) Town of Port Deposit for the "Visitor Center & Towson University Research & Education Center for the Endangered Map Turtle Repairs" project; (ii) Town of Perryville for the "Roof Preservation and Climate Control Upgrades for Roger's Tavern Museum" project; (iii) County Council of Dorchester County for the "Navigating Chesapeake Country & Heritage Tourism" project and FY 2026 Management, Marketing, and Block Grants; and (iv) Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway for the FY 2026 Management and Block Grants under the Maryland

Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2026 Chart. (Recused Ms. Turner)

Resolution R-900c: RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to (i) Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum for the “Restoration of historic buyboat Winnie Estelle” project; (ii) Sultana Education Foundation, Inc. for the “Holt Education Center Brickwork Repair” project; (iii) Mid-Shore Community Foundation, Inc. for the “Talbot County Public Landings Maritime Heritage Project;” and (iv) Maryland Center for History and Culture for the “Painted Screens of Baltimore Exhibition” project under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2026 Chart. Recused: Mr. Leshner)

Discussion Items

Secretary Flora hoped to have a discussion about the match requirements and the current grant cap amounts with information gathered from the survey that was distributed to the Authority and the heritage area directors. With not enough adequate time for a proper discussion and recognizing the importance of this conversation as it relates to the upcoming FY27 legislative session, Secretary Flora introduced the possibility of a special meeting.

Ms. Hofstedt shared that these items were discussed during the strategic planning process and the recent survey was sent ahead of this meeting to get additional feedback. The primary questions are: 1) what, if any, changes do the Authority want to make to the match requirement? And 2) what, if any, changes do the Authority want to make to grant cap amounts and how often should they be assessed? Ms. Hofstedt urged Authority members and heritage area directors who had not yet completed the survey to do so between now and the next meeting to better inform the discussion.

Member Announcements/New Business

Ms. Hughes mentioned the MD Two Fifty grants that are available. The Inclusive History Grant opportunity closes on July 25, 2025. And the MD Two Fifty Fellows Paid Internship opportunity is now operating on a rolling basis.

Heritage Area Director Highlights

Highlights were presented from the Beach to Bay Heritage Area and the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

Adjourn

Secretary Flora thanked everyone and called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hughes made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Redding

The meeting adjourned at 3:12 PM.