

**Minutes of the
One Hundred and Eleventh Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
August 4, 2025 Special Meeting**

The one hundred and eleventh meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened virtually on August 4, 2025. This was a special meeting convened to discuss the match and cap requirements for MHAA grants. The goal was to address two key questions that came out of the recent strategic planning process: 1) What, if any changes do the Authority want to make to the current match requirement? And 2) What, if any, changes do the Authority want to make to current grant cap amounts and how often should they be assessed? The public had the opportunity to view the meeting 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); Tara Balfe Clifford (Speaker of the House representative); Luis Cardona (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr.); Nathan Brown (Maryland Municipal League representative)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative); Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld); Pete Leshner (Maryland Association of Counties 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.)

Maryland Heritage Areas Program/Maryland Historical Trust 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 Counsel, Office of the Attorney General)

Heritage Area Representatives Present

Lucille Walker (Southern Maryland National Heritage Area and Co-Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition); Brigitte Carty (Lower Susquehanna Heritage Area and Co-Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition); Elizabeth Shatto (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area); Emily Huebner (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area); Meagan Baco (Anacostia Trails Heritage Area); Aaron Shapiro (Patapsco Valley Heritage Area); Mary Presutto (Heart of Chesapeake Country); Gail Owings (Stories of the Chesapeake); Shauntee Daniels (Baltimore National Heritage Area); Danielle Walters-Daivs (Baltimore National Heritage Area); Amber Sanders (Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area); Kim Folk (Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area); Jane Cox (Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area); Craig Sewell (Southern Maryland National Heritage Area); Brandon Rosario (Southern Maryland National Heritage Area)

Call to Order

Secretary Rebecca Flora called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM.

Ms. Waldron conducted the roll call.

Secretary Flora noted the new meeting format which utilizes the “contributor” and “viewer” functions in Google Meet. For the purpose of managing the meeting, contributors can speak at any time and viewers can raise their hands to request access to their camera and microphone. She also reminded everyone that the chat should not be used because it goes against the Open Meetings Act.

Secretary Flora emphasized the importance of this conversation and stated that the goal of the meeting was to answer any questions Authority members might have and provide adequate time for discussion to inform any outcomes or votes. She referenced the survey that was sent to both Authority members and heritage area directors, reminding everyone that it was meant to be a conversational tool to inform today’s discussion, not a final decision document. She thanked the Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition for providing their comments on the survey in advance and explained that there is motivation to reach consensus on these topics now given the upcoming legislative session. If the Authority decides they would like to pursue changes to the MHAA statute, it should be soon given that the process of requesting legislation changes via the Governor’s Office is already underway and for the next MHAA grant round. Sample resolutions were included in the briefing materials in case the Authority wanted to vote at the meeting.

Public Comment

Lucille Walker, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Ms. Walker noted the importance of this conversation being a discussion between the Authority and the Coalition and referenced the Coalition’s comments on the survey results, which were sent prior to the meeting. She requested that heritage area directors be able to

raise a hand during the meeting to respond to questions and Secretary Flora clarified that would be possible.

Brigitte Carty, Lower Susquehanna Heritage Area

Ms. Carty expressed disappointment about the new meeting format. Regarding the survey, she mentioned that she provided extensive comments about the match and cap requirements, in addition to filling out the survey, and proceeded to share the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway's (LSHG) opposition to unequal match requirements for heritage area management entities. She encouraged MHAA to adopt a uniform 20% match requirement or less for all grant categories, which she feels is grounded in both equity and practical necessity. This mirrors what was proposed in SB980 during the 2025 General Assembly.

Ms. Carty also expressed LSHG's thoughts about the funding caps for grants distributed to heritage area management entities. She recommended that the proposed \$300,000 for heritage area management entities should be applied solely to management grants to support funding the operation of heritage areas. The \$300,000 should not include marketing or block grants, which should have their own funding limits in keeping with their distinct functions and uses.

Elizabeth Shatto, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Ms. Shatto also urged the Authority to review the Coalition comments on the survey results and noted that her Public Comment testimony is not identical, but complimentary. She supports a 20% match requirement for all grants, including management, marketing, and block grants, noting that a modest match requirement can benefit non-profit partners in terms of capacity building. Requiring management entities to meet a higher match standard than their partners could be detrimental to their role in fostering project grants at the local level and their own operations. She stated that a reduction in match requirements is desirable, and she urged that the same rule apply to all nonprofits and government units including management entities.

Ms. Shatto also commented on the potential cooperative agreement model combining support of management, marketing, and block grants for heritage area management entities. Management grants are critical to the operations of management entities, but marketing and block grants are essential to the partners they serve. She believes that \$300,000 is far too low and could require heritage areas to sacrifice either operational capacity or what they offer to partners.

Meg Baco, Anacostia Trails Heritage Area

Mx. Baco shared that Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) does not agree with removing the full matching requirement for project grants especially when it can be met with donated time and volunteer hours; retaining some percentage of match requirement is important. They shared that ATHA does not agree with retaining a 1:1 match requirement for grants awarded to

heritage area management entities. They also asked a question about the details of the cooperative agreements and if the proposed lump sum distributions would have caps within each category of funding, to which Ms. Hofstedt replied that these details have not yet been determined.

Mx. Baco also commented on the block grants, pointing out that the grant amount does not include support for the heritage area's administration of these mini grants; it is not considered part of the "management" of the heritage area.

Shauntee Daniels, Baltimore National Heritage Area

Regarding the matching requirement, Ms. Daniels expressed that in the past, the Authority felt that it was beneficial to the whole program for grantees to be invested in their projects whether it be cash or volunteer time. She said that she agreed with Mx. Baco's comments about the matching requirement. As a National Heritage Area, the match requirement is extremely helpful when they complete their funding reports as it shows that they are leveraging the money they spend on fostering partnerships and making economic advancements in their community. Eliminating the match entirely will have a big impact on the Baltimore National Heritage Area (BNHA) when they do their reporting.

Ms. Daniels closed by requesting that a cash matching requirement – of some sort – stay in place, including block grants which are focused on neighborhood and community development. She closed by thanking everyone, including heritage area directors, for their work in making this program successful.

Kim Folk, Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area

Ms. Folk shared that as a state agency, the matching requirement does not impact the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area (Canal Place) in the same way as it does for many of the other heritage areas. They defer to what the majority of the Coalition agrees on regarding this discussion. However, Ms. Folk shared that they believe some sort of match is beneficial to show leverage.

In closing, Ms. Folk reiterated the importance of block grants and their local impact, especially in light of the recent devastating flooding in Western Maryland. Their partners will benefit from this funding opportunity, and a lower matching requirement will help them, especially those with lower resources.

Before moving on to the Authority discussion, Ms. Walker noted that the Coalition has a process where they meet together and make mutual decisions, which is how they came to consensus on the 20% matching requirement and up to \$300,000 for each of the grant categories outlined in SB980.

Ms. Carty also noted that the cash matching requirement creates a disproportionate impact among organizations – and heritage areas – that can fulfill this requirement and those that cannot. A higher matching requirement will penalize these communities. Lastly, she noted that the state of Maryland operates grant programs that do not impose a matching requirement, especially programs at the Maryland Historical Trust like the MHT Non-Capital Grant Program which does not require its grantees to provide a match.

Discussion Items: MHAA Grants Match and Cap Requirements

Secretary Flora gave a brief overview of the survey results, including the number of respondents, a summary of the current status of these discussion topics, and the survey results, in addition to the consultant recommendations that came out of the strategic planning process related to the match and cap requirements.

Regarding the matching requirements, Secretary Flora stated that it is up to the Authority to decide if changing this aspect of the statute will benefit the program. It is clear that the match has benefits and drawbacks, which were heard during the compelling Public Comment from heritage area directors. The sense from heritage area directors is that they are fairly united across the board that the match should be 20% for all grants. She invited the Authority members to use that as a starting point for sharing their opinions about the match, and a discussion ensued with Mr. Redding, Ms. Archer, Ms. Hughes, and Mr. Brown that resulted in the suggestion to remove the matching requirement from the MHAA statute with a provision that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority have the discretion and flexibility to establish match requirements through program guidelines on an as needed basis as they see fit.

Mr. Redding noted during the discussion that he feels heritage area management entities should not be unnecessarily competing for resources with the same community they are trying to serve. Regardless of what the Authority decides regarding match, he feels it should be fair across the board.

Ms. Archer noted during the discussion that DHCD has been eliminating match requirements for their grant programs slowly over time which included amending statute. Those programs still leverage funds even without the grant requirement and in some ways having no match requirement is administratively easier.

Ms. Hughes agreed that she prefers to have the match requirement eliminated from the statute with the provision that it is up to the Authority on some sort of regular basis to set the requirement. Ms. Hughes also noted during the discussion that this is similar to how grant caps are done now since they are not currently in the statutes but rather determined by the Authority.

Mayor Brown noted that local governments are having to make difficult financial decisions about what to fund, including matching dollars for heritage areas. He believes there are other examples of metrics, perhaps from POS, that are still able to show leveraged dollars even when there is no match requirement.

Regarding the cap requirements, Secretary Flora gave a summary of the current status of this discussion topic, and the survey results, in addition to the recommendations that came out of the strategic planning process. Based on the data, there was support across survey participants for raising the cap amounts for all grant categories.

Based on an earlier suggestion by Mr. Redding, Secretary Flora proposed that a task force comprised of three Authority members, and three Coalition members come together with all the information presented and collaborate on a recommendation for match and cap requirements to present to the whole Authority for a vote by the end of August. Secretary Flora also asked if Ms. DeLony could be involved in the task force meetings to provide legal advice.

Discussion ensued and it was suggested by Ms. Hughes that the Authority might be ready to take a vote to remove the matching requirement from MHAA statute now given the nearing timeline for the legislative process. Meanwhile, the task force could serve as a working group to discuss the process for how the Authority will determine specific match and cap requirements for the different grants if the statute change is successful. The task force could provide a recommended plan or guidance to the Authority on how to establish a process for setting these requirements. It was reiterated that the cap requirement is not written into statute, and the Authority currently has the ability to adjust these amounts at their discretion. Therefore, any proposed statute changes around grants would only relate to the matching requirement, not caps.

Mr. Redding agreed with this suggestion and made a motion that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, through the Maryland Department of Planning legislative process, will pursue the removal of the matching requirement for MHAA grants in the MHAA statute, providing the Authority with the discretion to establish appropriate matching requirements for all grants as circumstances dictate.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Brown and passed unanimously.

After the meeting, the following resolution language was provided by Ms. DeLony ex-post-facto:

Resolution R-100 to Approve Amending MHAA Statute to Remove Match Requirement

RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, through the Maryland Department of Planning legislative process, will pursue amending Md. Financial Institutions Code Ann. § 13-1113 to remove the 50% limitation on various project costs that MHAA grants may fund (and the resulting "match") and to authorize the Authority to establish appropriate match requirements for all the categories of MHAA grants at its discretion.

Ms. Carty requested that a copy of the statute be provided to Authority members highlighting the section that pertains to matching requirements.

Secretary Flora confirmed a task force will be established to provide recommendations on how the Authority will establish match requirements. In addition, the task force will also recommend a process for determining grant caps. The task force will present their proposed plan to the Authority at the October 2025 MHAA meeting in advance of the FY27 MHAA grant round and FY27 General Assembly session.

Ms. Hughes clarified that any changes to the match requirement would go into effect for the FY28 MHAA grant round pending approval of the statute change.

After the meeting it was confirmed that Authority members, Mr. Redding, Ms. Hughes, and Ms. Archer will serve on the task force and from the Coalition, Ms. Walker, Ms. Carty, and Ms. Ritchie will serve on the task force.

Adjourn

Secretary Flora called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Redding made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Brown. The meeting was adjourned at 5:27 PM.