

**Minutes of the
One Hundred and Twelfth Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
October 22, 2025**

The one hundred and twelfth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened at the Allegany Museum in Cumberland Maryland on October 22, 2025. The public had the opportunity to attend 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); Nicholas Redding (President of the Senate representative); 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.); Pete Leshner (Maryland Association of Counties representative); Lawana Holland-Moore (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation); Peter Ramsey (representing MD State Superintendent Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.); Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld); Audrey Broomfield (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Sandy Turner (Maryland Tourism Development Board representative); Hilary Bell (representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz); Nathan Brown (Maryland Municipal League representative); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative); Geoffrey Newman (representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Secretary Sanjay Rai); Chief Donna Abbott (President of the Senate representative)

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); 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); Gail Owings (Stories of the Chesapeake); Shauntee Daniels (Baltimore National Heritage Area); ; Amber Sanders (Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area); Dee Dee Ritchie (Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area); Kim Folk (Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area); Jane Cox (Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area); Holly Gilpin (Heart of Chesapeake County Heritage Area)

Heritage Area Representatives Absent

Sarah Rogers (Montgomery County Heritage Area); Danielle Walters-Daivs (Baltimore National Heritage Area)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Secretary Rebecca Flora at 9:32. Secretary Flora welcomed the Authority and Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition to the Allegany Museum and thanked Authority members for attending. She introduced Ms. Dee Dee Ritchie, the executive director of the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area.

Ms. Ritchie addressed the Authority and Coalition. She discussed the Allegany Museum and offered a warm welcome to visitors. She introduced Ms. Colleen Peterson, the board chair of the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority.

Ms. Peterson welcomed everyone to Western Maryland. She discussed the heritage area noting that Passages of the Western Potomac was the first certified heritage area. She shared that this heritage area helped to define the identity of the program, and looked towards the future discussing a county-wide expansion, as well as an expansive river park project.

Secretary Flora thanked Ms. Ritchie and Ms. Peterson and called on all members of the Authority to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes from the July 10, 2025 and August 4, 2025 Meetings

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

Secretary Flora Called for approval of the minutes of the July 10, 2025 meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. A single spelling error in the minutes was noted.

Ms. Tara Clifford made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Pete Leshner. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the July 10, 2025 Minutes as corrected.

Resolution R-200 to Approve Minutes from August 4, 2025 meeting

Secretary Flora Called for approval of the minutes of the August 4, 2025 meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

Mr. Nick Redding made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Leshner. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the August 4, 2025 Minutes as presented.

Chairperson Report

Vice Chair Position

Secretary Flora informed the Authority that according to the bylaws the vice chair position is supposed to be selected at the Authority's July meeting. Since this had not been done, Secretary Flora suggested that a vote be held in January 2026 to provide people the time to consider and nominate candidates.

Ms. Melissa Archer expressed interest in continuing service as the vice chair.

Secretary Flora thanked Ms. Archer and encouraged any other interested candidates to also come forward ahead of the January meeting.

Update on the Terms of Authority Members

Secretary Flora informed members that some terms are expiring in 2026. Program staff will work with the Governor's Appointments Office to process and inform us of these as there is new administration in place there and new ways of doing things.

Update on Administrative Amendment to MHAA Statute

Based on the Authority's decision in August 2025 to pursue removing grant caps and match requirements from statute, an administrative amendment is moving forward for the 2026 legislative session. A draft copy of the proposed revisions was included in the briefing materials. MDP is proposing removing language that sets grant caps that determine matches and adding language to let the Authority set match independently outside of the statute. In addition, we are proposing revisions to clean up a few other outdated items related to Authority membership, how agency reps support heritage areas, and how boundaries are shared with county clerk offices.

Secretary Flora reported that the Executive Committee reviewed the first draft of the Implementation Plan that is meant to be the companion piece to the Strategic Plan that was approved this past May. She then invited Ms. Ariane Hofstedt to provide additional information.

Management Report

Presentation of Draft Implementation Plan

Ms. Ariane Hofstedt started with a reminder slide about the vision, purpose, priorities, and results of the Maryland Heritage Areas Program as stated in the approved Strategic Plan. She then went on to remind everyone that this is a state level plan that is primarily outlining the work program staff at MHT and Authority members are doing. This is not a plan for the heritage area management entities; they have their own work plans.

The Implementation Plan articulates how we will fulfill the Strategic Plan and how we will measure success and ID gaps. It is organized into three sections: 1) Priority Tactics (Action Items); 2) Internal Performance Measures (for MHAA Program staff and MHAA members); and 3) External Impact Indicators; data primarily collected from grant applicants and grantees that replaces the outdated Parker Phillips Performance measures and metrics from 2010.

A copy of the draft Implementation Plan will be sent to all Authority members and heritage area directors after this meeting. Everyone will have approx. 1 month to comment and then the final draft will be presented in January 2025 with the goal of approval.

Once the Implementation Plan is approved, we will include regular “Strategic Updates” on the status of its progress at each MHAA meeting.

Ms. Hofstedt explained that a lot of items are already underway, and several of the proposed changes will create efficiencies that will save enough time to take on new items.

Ms. Archer noted that the plan is color coded into “continuing - refined - new” items and well organized.

Secretary Flora mentioned that the Executive Committee would have an additional meeting to go over the comments ahead of the January meeting in December.

Financing Fund Report

Ms. Hofstedt explained that the financing report that was included in the briefing packet indicated that there was \$258,330.40 in the grants reserve fund. Per the Authority’s vote to cap the grant reserve funds at \$100,000, \$158,330.40 has since been applied to three

reserve list grants for FY26 that will be reported shortly, leaving the current remaining balance at \$100,000.

At Secretary Flora's request, Ms. Hofstedt explained to the Authority how the cap was set, and how reserve funds accumulate and are spent. Each fiscal year the Authority votes on whether or not they want to place a cap on the amount of reserve grant funds that can accumulate from unspent prior year grants and allow the excess to go towards reserve list grants. At the July MHAA meeting, the Grants Review Panel puts forward a recommendation chart containing every single application ranked from highest to lowest. Every grant that falls below the funding line is put on the reserve list. Since the Authority has approved that recommendation chart, the Authority has already approved the reserve list and the staff's ability to award these grants when excess funds are available.

FY26 Status of Grants and Reserve Grant Update

Mr. Arvizu discussed the status of the FY26 Project Grant Round. They noted that nearly 85% of FY26 grant agreements had been executed, a significant increase from prior years. They then discussed three grants that had been funded on the reserve list. These grants were to Historic Annapolis, Spruce Forest Artisan Village, and Catoctin Furnace.

Secretary Flora asked what had led to the increase in efficiency with processing grant agreements.

Mx. Arvizu explained that support from MHT plus a complete revision of the process had led to faster turnarounds on getting grant agreements executed. Staff have decreased the time it takes for grantees to get first payment significantly in the past two years.

Action Items

Resolution R-300 Approve a Request by the Town of Oakland to convert a portion of its FY 2018 Capital Grant for "Pedestrian Gateway" to support capital improvements to the Front Page Stage.

Ms. Martha Waldron discussed a programmatic amendment to the Town of Oakland's FY2018 grant. She introduced the original grant and provided context for its proposed change. She introduced Vallerie Stellick and Kathy Beachler as representatives from the project.

Discussion of the grant amendment followed, with some Authority members expressing apprehension over the amendment since the nature of the project was so separate from the original design. Ms. Elizabeth Hughes noted that these kinds of scope changes do have precedent, and that it is always positive to spend old money down in a way that honors the

original intent of the grant and in a heritage area that doesn't always have a lot of projects to fund.

Mr. Redding made the following motion, which Lawana seconded. Ms. Archer opposed, all remaining members voted in favor. With no abstentions, the motion was approved.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves Grantee's request to convert a portion of Grantee's match and a \$75,650 portion of its FY 2018 Capital Grant (Pedestrian Gateway) to support improvements to the Front Page Stage, including artist/artisan wayfinding signage fabrication and installation, artist/artisan hardscape fabrication and installation, and ADA-accessible seating.

Resolution R-400 Approve a Request by the Washington County Historical Society to convert use of its FY 2026 Capital Grant for the "Miller House 200th (1825-2025) Curatorial Facility Initiative Ph I" to support non-capital project costs for Grantee's feasibility study of the Nicodemus Building.

Ms. Waldron discussed the amendment the Washington County Historical Society's FY26 project grant. She explained that a new site for the project had been selected, based on the availability of a new property.

Mr. Andy Stone, the director of the Washington County Historical Society, elaborated on the reasons for the changes. He explained that the Society had been encouraged by the City of Hagerstown to change where the project would take place, with the aim of creating a robust heritage hub at the new site.

Discussion followed, centered on how this project may have done in the normal grant round. Mr. Stone emphasized that the original intent of the project is included in the revised request, with additional complimentary items that will take in a larger facility.

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

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves Grantee's request to convert Grantee's match and its FY 2026 \$20,000 Capital Grant for the "Miller House 200th (1825-2025) Curatorial Facility Initiative Ph I" to support non-capital project costs to conduct a feasibility study of the Nicodemus Building.

Task Force Report

Ms. Archer reported that the task force created by the Authority at the August 4, 2025 special meeting met three times. They completed all three deliverables: 1) draft a policy for MHAA to establish grant caps and match (in the event match requirements are removed

from statute); 2) recommend funding cap amounts for FY27 grants; and 3) recommend match requirements for FY28 grants.

Ms. Archer went over the draft policy that was included in the briefing materials and the following recommendations of the task force:

- For FY27, keep existing \$100,000 cap for Capital Grants and keep existing \$50,000 cap for Non-Capital Grants, and establish an up to \$200,000 cap for heritage area Management Grants through a Cooperative Agreement that also allows for marketing and mini-grant funding
- For FY28, if the match requirement is removed from statute during the 2026 legislative session, the task force recommends implementing a 20% match for all MHAA grants in the FY28 grant round, or as soon as possible based on the date future legislation is enacted.

She also explained that the task force recommends using an ad-hoc work group to make future recommendations regarding grant match and caps, meeting roughly once per year or as needed.

Resolution R-500 Approval of Grant Match and Funding Cap Requirements Policy

Secretary Flora introduced the grant match and funding cap requirements policy and asked for a motion.

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

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the “Grant Match and Funding Cap Requirements Policy” that is being recommended by the task force designated by MHAA for the purpose of outlining a process, schedule, and criteria that will be used to determine (i) match requirements, in expectation that legislation is approved to remove the 50% grant funding limitations/match requirement from the MHAA statute, and (ii) funding caps for MHAA capital and non-capital project grants, and grants to heritage area management entities.

Resolution R-600 Approval of Task Force Recommendations effective for FY27 Funding Caps

Secretary Flora introduced the proposed changes to the funding caps for FY27 and asked for a motion.

Ms. Archer discussed the cooperative agreement approach proposed by the task force for the heritage area management entities. This would have management, marketing and

block grants rolled into a single grant. These grants would be reviewed by the Authority, with roughly 3-4 grants per year being evaluated and renewed.

Mr. Dennis Doster made the following motion, which Ms. Archer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the recommendations of the task force that the following caps remain in effect as allowable “up to” amounts for FY27 MHAA grants:

- up to \$100,000 for capital projects;
- up to \$50,000 for non-capital projects;
- Management, Marketing, and Block grant funding will be combined into one lump sum payment as part of a cooperative agreement, in an amount of up to \$200,000; and there will be no restriction on the amount of funding that can be spent on the three funding categories within the lump sum.

These funding caps will be published in MHAA’s Grant Guidelines. Current 1:1 match requirements will remain in place for FY27 grants.

Resolution R-700 Approval of Task Force Recommendation on effective for FY28 Grant Match Requirements

Secretary Flora introduced the recommendation to alter the grant match requirements to a ratio of 80(grant):20(match) and asked for a motion.

Discussion on the timing of this change followed noting that since the FY27 grant round is being announced in December 2025, the soonest this change could take effect would be FY28.

Mr. Redding recommended changing the term “in anticipation” to “supports” in the resolution.

Ms. Clifford made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Redding. The motion passed unanimously with amendments.

RESOLVED, that the Authority supports the match requirements being removed from the MHAA statute, approves the recommendations of the task force that the Authority set a 20% match requirement for all MHAA grants. These match requirements will be published in MHAA's Grant Guidelines, and the Authority will annually assess the need to amend them.

Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition Report

Ms. Lucille Walker, executive director of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, spoke on behalf of the Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition. She discussed the Maryland Liberty Tree project and encouraged attendees to get involved. She reminded the Authority of last session's attempted legislation and discussed plans for further legislation this year. She expressed an interest in having the Authority and the Coalition work together on legislative initiatives.

Heritage Area Director Highlights

Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Ms. Walker introduced the Southern Maryland National Heritage area and discussed the efforts of both the state and national heritage areas. She discussed a 15-site passport program to draw visitors to sites across the heritage area.

Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Ms. Emily Huebner introduced the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. She discussed a recently completed GeoTour that had been completed across Carol, Frederick, and Washington Counties. She invited Authority and Coalition members to HCWHA's Annual Meeting in Westminster.

Public Comment

No individuals elected to provide public comment.

Adjourn

Secretary Flora called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Clifford made the motion to adjourn, which Mr. Leshar seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:58.