

**Minutes of the In-Person Public Hearing of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority on a
Proposal to Enlarge the Boundaries of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area
May 6, 2025**

A public hearing of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened in-person at the Upper Marlboro Branch Library located at 14730 Main Street in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, on May 6, 2025. The public was invited to attend and provide comment. A total of 19 people were in attendance.

MHAA Members 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); Dennis Doster (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism); Sandy Turner (Maryland Tourism Development Board representative); Tara Balfe Clifford (Speaker the House representative)

Program Staff Present:

Ariane M. Hofstedt (Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Martha Waldron (Assistant Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program)

Staff from Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Present:

Meagan Baco, Executive Director; Valarie Woodall, Associate Director; Nick Hurley and Biruk Grimes, Service Year Program Associates hosted through the Department of Service and Civic Innovation.

Members of the Public Present:

Linda Garoute, Town of Eagle Harbor; Mayor Sarah Franklin, Town of Upper Marlboro; Mayor Noah Waters and Mrs. Linda Waters, Town of Eagle Harbor; Lucille Walker, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area; Anjela Barnes, Accokeek Foundation; Camille Kashaka, Joe's Movement Emporium/Creative Suitland; Eddie Gonzalez, Director, Partnerships & Grants, NPS Chesapeake Gateways

Call to Order

The public hearing on the proposal to enlarge the boundaries of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Secretary Rebecca Flora.

Welcome and Introductions

Secretary Flora welcomed everyone and thanked them for taking the time to attend the public hearing. She introduced herself and the other MHAA members present. She also introduced

local officials Mayor Noah Waters of Eagle Harbor and Mayor Sarah Franklin of Upper Marlboro and the Maryland Heritage Areas Program Staff in attendance.

Requirements and Procedures, Background, and Process

Secretary Flora provided a brief background on the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority which oversees the Maryland Heritage Areas Program and approves or rejects Heritage Area Management Plans, designates Certified Heritage Areas, approves Heritage Area Boundary Amendments, and approves grants to projects in Certified Heritage Areas.

There are currently 13 Certified Heritage Areas located throughout the state, each with different and distinct boundaries.

ATHA was certified as a Heritage Area in 2001. They last amended their original boundaries in 2017 and more recently submitted a proposal to MHAA on April 7, 2025 requesting another amendment that would be county-wide to include all of Prince George's County. ATHA would be the first Maryland Certified Heritage Area to have a county-wide boundary if their proposal is approved.

MHAA has 90 days to respond to their request and is required by law to hold at least one public hearing during that time prior to acting on their proposal. This hearing is fulfilling that requirement.

Secretary Flora shared that the purpose of this public hearing is to solicit comments on the proposal. Opponents and proponents may submit testimony in writing or orally at this hearing. In addition, written testimony was accepted prior to the meeting and will be accepted after the meeting but must be received by May 13, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. to Administrator, Ariane M. Hofstedt via email. If you are not able to submit testimony via email, please mail your comments to Ariane M. Hofstedt's attention, at Maryland Historical Trust, 100 Community Place, 3rd Floor, Crownsville, MD 21032.

Secretary Flora invited Mx. Meagan Baco, Executive Director of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, to present their proposed boundary amendment.

Mx. Baco shared a brief video about the proposed boundary amendment and then spoke about the process for developing this plan, how approvals were obtained from local jurisdictions, and the merits of the request to expand.

Public Comment

Ms. Hofstedt referenced written testimony in support of the boundary expansion submitted prior to the public hearing from the following: Theresa Cullen, Executive Director, Alice Ferguson Foundation; Sarah Franklin, Mayor, Town of Upper Marlboro; Noah Waters, Mayor, Town of Eagle Harbor; Leslie Graves, President & CEO, Experience Prince George's, Maryland; Brooke Kidd, Executive Director, Joe's Movement Emporium/Creative Suitland; Rhonda Dallas, CEO and Chief Curator, Prince George's County Arts and Humanities Council; Anjela Barnes, Executive Director, Accokeek Foundation; Eliabeth Kiker, Executive Director, Washington Area Bicyclist

Association; Kevin Cabrera, Assistant Division Chief, Natural and Historic Resources Division, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County; Lucille Walker, Executive Director, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area.

Prior to this meeting testimony in favor of the amendment was also provided by two other entities as part of ATHA's submission to MHAA. They include, Monta Burrough, Acting-Director, Department of Economic and Community Development, City of Laurel; and Peter Shapiro, Chair, Prince George's County Planning Board.

Secretary Flora invited the individuals who signed up to give in-person testimony to proceed. Supportive oral testimony was heard from the following: Noah Waters, Mayor, Town of Eagle Harbor; Sarah Franklin, Mayor, Town of Upper Marlboro; Anjela Barnes, Executive Director, Accokeek Foundation; Camille Kashaka, Creative Suitland; and Lucille Walker, Executive Director, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area.

After the public comment section of the meeting, Secretary Flora opened the floor for questions. None were asked. She then concluded the meeting by reporting that following the hearing, the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority will meet virtually on May 15, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. to review and act on the proposal to approve the enlargement of the boundaries of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. A summary of the testimony received by May 13, 2025 will be shared with Authority members at their meeting. That meeting is open to the public and will be held virtually.

If the request to amend the boundary is approved, local jurisdictions, non-profit organizations, businesses, and individuals in the newly added areas will be eligible to receive grants or other benefits available through the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

Adjourn

Secretary Flora thanked everyone for attending the public hearing, especially those who gave testimony, and adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.