Minutes of a Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
Executive Committee
December 18, 2025

The December 18, 2025 meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) Executive Committee was convened virtually and streamed live for the public. The purpose of this meeting was to consider an emergency grant from the Warren Historic Site, to provide an update on FY27 grant application materials, and to discuss the draft Implementation Plan.

MHAA Executive Committee Members Present:
Secretary Rebecca L. Flora, Dennis Doster, Melissa Archer, Pete Lesher

Staff Present:
Administrator Ariane Hofstedt, Assistant Administrators Andrew Arvizu and Martha Waldron, Deputy Principal Counsel Rieyn Delony

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 PM.

Opening Remarks

Sec. Flora welcomed the Executive Committee and viewers. She discussed the two action items for the day.

Resolution R-100 to Approve an Emergency Grant Request by Warren Historic Site for $15,000 towards the "Restoration of the Martinsburg Negro School (MNS)"

Ms. Hofstedt presented the $15,000 emergency grant request for repair and painting of wood siding on the schoolhouse structure. She explained that the applicant has a FY24 grant and that the primary need for funding is from the dramatic increase in cost over the past two years. She explained that typically the same line items are not covered over two or more grants, but it would be possible to separate them via an amendment. Additionally, she noted that the project has been reviewed by the Easement Committee and approved.

A discussion ensued and Sec. Flora called on Mr. Tom Taltavull, the architect on the project, to share more about the request.
Mr. Taltavull provided more details related to the current and proposed scope of work for the removal and repair of the vinyl and original wood siding.

Additional discussion about the cost estimate followed. Sec. Flora called for a motion.

Ms. Archer made the following motion per the resolution as written, which was seconded by Mr. Doster. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves Grantee's emergency grant request to provide $15,000 capital funds to the "Restoration of the Martinsburg Negro School (MNS)" for the repair and painting of portions of the original wood siding on the schoolhouse structure as well as doors and hardware and exterior lighting.

Sec. Flora called on the program to reassess what projects were considered emergencies at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Mr. Doster suggested a working group to reassess the emergency grant policy.

Update on FY27 Grant Application Materials

Ms. Hofstedt shared that project grants for FY27 open tomorrow 12/19/2025. She explained that Intent to Apply forms are due February 2 and full applications are due March 31. She also shared the changes to management, marketing, and block grants for management entities, including the combination of the three grants into a single revised management grant application, the implementation of cooperative agreements with heritage area management entities, an increase in the total allowable award amount to $200,000, and changes to the payment schedule to be 80% up front and 20% upon completion. Finally, she discussed the role of the heritage area management entities' action plans, how they will be reviewed, and how they will interface with the cooperative agreements.

Review and Discussion of Comments on Draft Implementation Plan

Sec. Flora noted the extent of comments and feedback that have gone into preparing the Implementation Plan.

Ms. Hofstedt explained the documents that went out ahead of the meeting, including comments from heritage area directors, comments from authority members, and a summary of key points of discussion.

Ms. Hofstedt highlighted three key tactics in the draft Implementation Plan that require discussion. She explained that Authority and Coalition members were given 4 weeks, yielding 10 responses. Three responses were from the Authority and 7 were from the Coalition.

The first key proposed tactic to "Revise eligible marketing expenses and requirements to be included in lump sum funding (i.e. instead of joint submission with DMOs, heritage areas provide a letter of acknowledgment from DMOs indicating they support and have been informed of proposed activities)" includes a recommendation to have a letter of support from DMOs that would be required for any marketing funds requested by heritage area management entities in their management grants. This was proposed to encourage collaboration and prevent overlap between state agencies. She noted that several heritage area directors are opposed to this requirement. Ms. Hofstedt suggested that, instead of requiring a letter, there could be a question in the final report asking heritage area management entities to explain if/how they worked with their DMOs.

A discussion ensued about the desire to have MHAA and MOTD work collaboratively and the pros and cons of requiring a letter of support from the DMOs. Sec. Flora called to remove the letter of support requirement and implement the suggestion to include a question in the final report asking heritage area management entities to explain if/how they worked with their DMOs.

Mr. Doster, Mr. Lesher, and Ms. Archer concurred.

For the second key proposed tactic to "Maintain protocols for MHAA meetings that allow for open communication, updates from the heritage areas, opportunity for public comment, and efficient decision-making by Authority members," Ms. Hofstedt explained that an Authority member and a heritage area director both expressed a desire to have a Coalition representative serve as a non-voting member of f MHAA.

A discussion of the current membership requirements language in the statute followed along with the other opportunities the Coalition has to participate in the meetings. The Executive Committee concurred that the language in the proposed tactic should remain as is.

For the third key proposed tactic, "Convene meetings with DMOs in each heritage area to update them on changes to marketing grants and discuss potential new opportunities for enhanced collaboration with the Program," Ms. Hofstedt explained that there was a lot of opposition from the heritage area directors to this recommendation, centered on a concern over how this would impact the relationship between the two organizations. She explained that the staff recommended changing the language to be focused on an agency-to-agency level.

Sec. Flora agreed that things should remain agency-to-agency, supporting the proposed language change.

Mr. Doster, Mr. Lesher, and Ms. Archer concurred.

Next, Ms. Hofstedt highlighted second-tier tactics in the draft Implementation Plan such as honorariums for local grants review panelists, annual retreats, the role of the ad-hoc working group, and field trips for Authority members.

Discussions followed for all items.

It was suggested that a specific ad-hoc working group would be an appropriate way to determine if a policy should be put in place for local heritage areas to pay local reviewers an honorarium using management grant funds.

Regarding the proposed tactic to "Explore the possibility of an annual/biennial retreat or training to strengthen MHAA members' knowledge and effectiveness as champions of the Program," Ms. Hofstedt explained that OAG confirmed that a retreat is possible without it having to be an open meeting as long as it is educational and training-focused only. She explained that there were comments suggesting the addition of the Coalition at the retreat.

A discussion followed and Executive Committee members agreed that Coalition members could be invited as needed and the language in the Implementation Plan around this item go unchanged.

Next, Ms. Hofstedt asked if the role of the ad-hoc working group that made grant match and cap recommendations last year should be expanded to include reviewing and making recommendations about grantmaking policies.

A discussion followed and Sec. Flora recommended that if the same type of ad-hoc working group reconvened, it should only consider and make recommendation on the grant match and caps.

Mr. Doster. Mr. Lesher, and Ms. Archer concurred.

Next, Ms. Hofstedt discussed the proposed tactic to investigate smaller field trips to heritage areas for Authority members. She explained that OAG had cautioned that these trips would be subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

A discussion followed and it was recommended that the tactic remain in the plan without the qualifiers pertaining to cooperative agreements and strategic developments.

Sec. Flora, Mr. Lesher, Ms. Archer, and Mr. Doster concurred.

Next, Ms. Hofstedt discussed the Implementation Plan's proposed metrics which are referred to in the plan as internal performance measures and external impact indicators.

A discussion ensued under internal performance measures about whether certain percentages should be set as a metric for Authority member attendance. It was suggested that the tactic be a general expectation statement instead about "Participation of all Authority members in MHAA activities" and attendance continue to be tracked and reported.

Sec. Flora, Mr. Lesher, Ms. Archer, and Mr. Doster concurred.

Next, Ms. Hofstedt discussed the proposed external impact indicator for types of audiences served. She explained that heritage area directors expressed concerns over collecting racial and ethnic data.

A discussion followed about how other state agencies are struggling with this as well and how other museums and cultural institutions are tackling this. It was proposed that the indicator be amended to remove racial and ethnic specifics and provide a drop-down list of general audience types instead, such the general public, seniors, school children, out-of-town visitors, local residents, etc.

Sec. Flora, Mr. Lesher, Ms. Archer, and Mr. Doster concurred.

Finally, Ms. Hofstedt discussed the proposed external impact indicators for the heritage area management entities. Specifically, the items that would be requested in their Management Grant final reports. The heritage area directors expressed concern over tracking and reporting board participation. As a result, Ms. Hofstedt recommended that heritage area board participation be included under general volunteer participation.

Sec. Flora, Ms. Archer, Mr. Lesher, and Mr. Doster concurred with this suggestion.

Resolution R-200 to Approve Draft Implementation Plan to be Presented to Full Authority

Sec. Flora asked for a motion to approve the following resolution.

Mr. Doster made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Archer and passed unanimously.

RESOLVED, that the Executive Committee approves the draft Implementation Plan with amendments discussed at the December 18, 2025 meeting for presentation to the full Authority at the January 8, 2026 meeting.

Adjourn

Sec. Flora thanked members of the Executive Committee and staff for completing the review of the Implementation Plan. The meeting adjourned at 3:45.