

**Minutes of the  
One Hundred and Fifteenth Meeting of the  
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority  
July 9, 2026**

The one hundred and fifteenth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened virtually on July 9, 2026. The public had the opportunity to watch the meeting and speak during Public Comment via Google Meet.

**Authority Members/Designees Present**

Secretary Rebecca M. Flora (MD Department of Planning and serving as the Chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority); Melissa Archer (representing MD Department of Housing & Community Development Secretary Jake Day and serving as the Vice Chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority); Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer); Tara Balfe Clifford (Speaker of the House representative); Lawana Holland-Moore (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation); Audrey Broomfield (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks); Chief Donna Abbott (President of the Senate representative); Sandy Turner (Maryland Tourism Development Board representative); Hilary Bell (representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz); Daniel Schuster (representing MD Higher Education Commission Acting Secretary Elena Quiroz-Livanis); Nicholas Redding (President of the Senate representative); Luis Cardona (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr.)

**Authority Members/Designees Absent**

Dennis Doster (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism); Pete Leshner (Maryland Association of Counties representative); Nathan Brown (Maryland Municipal League representative); Peter Ramsey (representing MD State Superintendent Dr. Carey M. Wright); Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Katie Thomson); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative)

**Maryland Heritage Areas Program/Maryland Historical Trust Staff Present**

Ariane Hofstedt (Program Director, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Martha Waldron (Program Officer, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Andrew Arvizu (Program Officer, Maryland Heritage Areas Program); Rieyn DeLony (Deputy Counsel, Office of the Attorney General); Eva Muresan (Impact Intern, Maryland Heritage Areas Program)

**Heritage Area Representatives Present**

Elizabeth Shatto (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area); Lucille Walker (Southern Maryland National Heritage Area); Brandon Rosario (Southern Maryland National Heritage Area); Brigitte Carty (Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway); Mary Prusetto (Heart of the Chesapeake Heritage Area); Gail Owings (Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area); Jane Cox (Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area); Katherine Gill (Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area); Kim Folk (Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area); Amber Sanders (Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area); Aaron Shapiro (Patapsco Valley Heritage Area); Sarah Rogers (Montgomery County Heritage Area); Meagan Baco (Anacostia Trails Heritage Area)

### **Call to Order**

Secretary Flora called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

Ms. Waldron conducted the roll call.

### **Approval of Minutes April 9, 2026 Meeting**

#### Resolution R-100 to Approve Minutes from April 9, 2026 meeting

Ms. Clifford made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Hughes. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the April 9, 2026 Minutes as presented.

### **Chairperson Report**

#### Update on MHAA Appointments

Secretary Flora thanked Chief Abbott and Mr. Leshner for serving on the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. Their terms will be completed September 30, 2026. William Atkinson will serve as the Maryland Association of Counties representative beginning October 1, 2026.

Non-voting members Mr. Ramsey and Ms. Broomfield will be able to vote on action items beginning October 1, 2026 when the statute changes take effect.

#### Update on Executive Committee Approval of Emergency Grant

On May 27, 2026, the executive committee approved an emergency grant request in the amount of \$13,000 to the Cambridge Woman's Club for an Emergency Electrical Replacement for Sycamore Cottage and Clubhouse in the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area.

The executive committee wants to prioritize updating the Emergency Grant Policy with clearer criteria to reflect the intent of the policy to support true emergencies rather than neglected maintenance.

#### Update on MHAA Policies and Regulations

Secretary Flora shared that administrative changes to both the procurement and financial spot check policies were made to address recommendations from a recent agency-wide audit. These include increasing the spending threshold requiring three written bids to \$50,000, which aligns with the state's small procurement procedures and adjusting the criteria for which projects are selected for financial spot check to include materiality, risk, and compliance with previous awards/requirements, if applicable.

Secretary Flora has also requested that program staff prioritize a policy audit in FY27, including the emergency grant policy and exploring a policy on AI and mini-grant standards. While these will primarily take place at the administrative level, the executive committee will lift up anything that needs to be discussed by the entire Authority.

Program staff have also begun updating the Authority's regulations to reflect recent statute changes. It is anticipated that a draft of these will be ready for review at the October quarterly meeting.

Secretary Flora commended the local heritage areas for their participation in the Maryland250 happening across the state.

#### Update on 30th Anniversary Reception

Program staff will be sending out a Save the Date for the Maryland Heritage Areas Program's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception that will be taking place on October 20, 2026 at the Howard County Conservancy. We estimate 150-200 attendees comprised of past and present Authority members, heritage area boards, staff, volunteers, grantees, and elected officials. The event will cost approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 which will be paid for using unspent operational funds from prior years. We will be seeking sponsorships as well.

### **Management Report**

#### MHAA Financing Fund Report

Ms. Hofstedt provided a summary of the financing fund report that was including in the briefing materials: there is currently \$100,000 in grant reserve funds and \$40,620 in unspent FY26 emergency grant funds. These amounts will both roll over into FY27 and can be immediately applied to FY27 projects on the reserve list.

Ms. Hofstedt also noted that in FY26, eight projects were awarded off the reserve list, and four emergency grants were awarded.

### Strategic Plan Highlights

Ms. Hofstedt highlighted updates on strategic plan priorities and tactics, including removing specific grant caps and corresponding match requirements from the MHAA statute (completed), developing a process for updates and development of new policies (in progress), and collecting impact data at the time of Intent to Apply, the full application, and in the final report (ongoing).

Ms. Hofstedt also shared that Dee Dee Ritchie, executive director of the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area/Canal Place, retired on June 30 and complemented her impact and contributions to western Maryland, and the program.

### MHAA Intern Update

Ms. Waldron introduced Eva Muresan, the Maryland Heritage Areas Program Impact Intern, who is working to create a visual representation of the program's impact across the state over the last 30 years using ArcGIS StoryMaps.

### **Action Items**

#### Resolution R-200 to Approve the Election of a Vice Chair

Mr. Redding made the following motion to re-elect Ms. Archer as MHAA's Vice Chair, which was seconded by Ms. Clifford. The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves a motion to elect Melissa Archer to serve as Vice Chair of the Authority, pursuant to MHAA Bylaws, Article V, Section 3(b).

#### Resolution R-300 to Approve Open Meeting Act Designee

Ms. Hughes made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Turner. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority designates member Melissa Archer as its Open Meeting Act Designee who has completed the Maryland Open Meetings Act training required under § 3-213 of the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Annotated Code.

#### Resolution R-400 to Approve a Not-to-Exceed Cap on the Reservation of Unspent Prior Year Emergency and Grant Funds Available for FY 2027

Ms. Archer made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Cardona. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

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 2027 (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 2027 emergency funds in the amount of \$100,000 approved by the Authority under Resolution R-200 at its meeting on January 8, 2026.

Resolution R-500 to Approve Applying Excess Reserve Funds to the FY 2027 Reserve List Grants

Mr. Schuster made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Turner. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the use of Reserve Funds that exceed the Reserve Funds Cap approved in Resolution R-300 at its meeting on July 9, 2026 to fund the grants designated as the FY 2027 "Reserve List Grants" on the 2027 Grants Chart (the "2027 Chart"), in the order in which they appear in the 2027 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 2027 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 2027 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 2027 Chart is able to be fully funded.

Ms. Hofstedt gave a brief overview of the FY27 grants review process and funding recommendations. Grants were awarded in 21 counties and the City of Baltimore. Queen Anne's County and Carroll County applications were unfunded in the FY27 round. A high-ranking Carroll County grant is likely to be funded quickly from the approved reserve funds.

Ms. Hofstedt also shared a breakdown of how MHAA's \$6,000,000 allocation for FY27 is being utilized, including: \$2,505,700 for project grants (41.76%); \$2,494,300 for management grants (41.57%); \$600,000 for MHAA administrative costs at MHT (10%); \$300,000 for the MHT Historic Preservation Non-capital Grant Program (5%); and \$100,000 in FY27 emergency grant funds (1.67%).

Resolution R-600 to Approve FY 2027 Management Grants to Management Entities of Certified Heritage Areas

Mr. Redding made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Holland-Moore. The motion passed unanimously with Ms. Turner abstaining.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves funding of Management Grants to the management entities of the Certified Heritage Areas, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2027 Chart, for the management, marketing, and distribution of mini grants within the thirteen Certified Heritage Areas: 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.

Secretary Flora congratulated the heritage area management entities on their grant awards and introduced Kym Rice, Chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Program Grants Review Panel, who provided an overview of the panel's discussions and decisions regarding the capital and non-capital project grants recommended for funding.

Resolution R-700 to Approve FY 2027 Capital and Non-Capital Project Grants (collectively referred to as the "Resolution R-700 Grants")

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

RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Area Authority approves funding of Resolution R-700 Grants consisting of (i) 16 capital projects; and (ii) 20 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 2027 Chart. These grants do not include the grants approved separately pursuant to Resolutions R-700a through R-700e.

Resolutions R-700a through R-700e to Approve FY 2027 Grants Requiring Recusal of Authority

Members with Conflicts of Interest (collectively, the "Separately Approved Grants")

Ms. Clifford made the following motions, which were seconded by Ms. Hughes. The motions passed with Ms. Bell abstaining from R-700a, Mr. Redding abstaining from R-700b, Ms. Archer abstaining from R-700d, and Ms. Turner abstaining from R-700e. Mr. Leshner was not present to abstain from R-700c.

**Resolution R-700a:** RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to (i) Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc. for the "Fire in the Furnace - Digital Projection Mapping at Catoctin Furnace" project; (ii) Adkins Arboretum, Ltd for the "Living Collection Connection" project; and (iii) Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park for the "Restoration of Civilian Conservation Corps Shelter (Shelter 10) in Patapsco Valley State Park" project under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and

in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2027 Chart. (Recused: Ms. Hilary Bell)

**Resolution R-700b:** RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to (i) Preservation Maryland for the “The Restoration and Stabilization of Rock Run Mill” and the “The Restoration of Fort Frederick” projects under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2027 Chart. (Recused: Mr. Nicholas Redding)

**Resolution R-700c:** RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to (i) Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum for the “Hooper Strait Lighthouse - Structural Stabilization & Repairs” project; and (ii) Sultana Education Foundation for the “Phase I - Radcliffe Creek Paddling and Nature Center” project under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2027 Chart. (Recused: Mr. Pete Leshner)

**Resolution R-700d:** RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to (i) Preservation Maryland for the “The Restoration and Stabilization of Rock Run Mill” and the “The Restoration of Fort Frederick” projects under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2027 Chart. (Recused: Ms. Melissa Archer)

**Resolution R700e:** RESOLVED, that the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority approves grants to (i) Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, Incorporated for the “FY 2027 Management Grant” project; (ii) Preservation Maryland for the “The Restoration and Stabilization of Rock Run Mill” project; (iii) The Hosanna Community House, Incorporated for “Hosanna School Museum Holographic Experience: From the Underground Railroad to Freedom and Education” project; and (iv) Town of Perryville for the “Rodger's Tavern Museum Exterior Preservation and Weatherization Project” under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Grant Program, as detailed and in accordance with the amounts and terms set forth in the 2027 Chart. (Recused: Ms. Sandy Turner)

### **Discussion Items/Member Announcements/New Business**

None.

### **Public Comment**

No members of the public chose to speak during public comment.

### **Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition Report**

Ms. Walker and Ms. Carty gave an overview of the heritage areas’ participation in various Maryland250 events, thanked Ms. Rice and the state Grants Review Panel and MHAA for their review and approval of FY27 grants, and mentioned two upcoming

advocacy/outreach efforts: the Maryland Municipal League summer conference and the Maryland Association of Counties summer conference.

They also shared that they will be stepping down as the co-chairs of the Coalition. A vote will be held in August to select new Coalition leadership.

Secretary Flora thanked them for their important work.

### **Heritage Area Director Highlights**

Highlights were presented by Ms. Carty from the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Area, Ms. Rogers from the Montgomery County Heritage Area, Mx. Baco from the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, and Ms. Shatto from the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

Ms. Shatto did not sign up for public comment but did request that the heritage areas be involved with the policy revisions that will take place this year, particularly since the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area is also looking into setting their own guidelines and policies for AI. She also noted that she would like the opportunity to share important grants funded under the Emergency Grants policy that may or may not have addressed an actual emergency situation. Finally, she requested a summary of the FY27 grant round including the number of applications submitted, the amount of funding requesting, and the total awarded for each heritage area to share with her board.

### **Adjourn**

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

The meeting adjourned at 2:49 PM.