

Minutes of the  
Ninetieth Meeting of the  
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority  
April 8, 2021

The ninetieth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened on April 8, 2021 via web conference call. The public was notified about the meeting and had the opportunity to listen via phone or web.

**Authority Members/Designees Present:**

Robert S. McCord, Secretary, MD Department of Planning and Chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority; Pete Leshner (MD Association of Counties representative); Burton Kummerow (President of the Senate representative); Marty Baker (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Gregory Slater); Elizabeth Fitzsimmons (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Kelly Schulz); Nita Settina (representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio); Daniel Spedden (MD Tourism Development Board representative); Bruce Lesh (representing MD State Department of Education Secretary Karen Salmon); Amy Seitz (representing MD Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Kenneth C. Holt); Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer); Robert D. Campbell (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation and serving as Vice Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority); Mary Anne Harms (Representative of the Speaker of the House); Natalie Chabot (Representative for MD Greenways); Nicholas Redding (Speaker of the House representative, pending final oath); Dennis Doster (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism, pending final oath)

**Authority Members/Designees Absent:**

Lee Towers (representing MD Higher Education Commission Secretary James D. Fielder, Jr.); Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Joseph Bartenfelder); Vacant (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism);

**Staff Present:** Jennifer Ruffner, Ennis Barbery Smith, Andrew Arvizu (Maryland Historical Trust); Paul Cucuzzella, Rieyn DeLony (Office of the Attorney General)

**Heritage Area Directors/Staff Present:** Sarah Rogers (Montgomery County Heritage Area & Co-Chair, Maryland Coalition of Heritage Areas); Deidra Ritchie (Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area); Elizabeth Shatto (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area); Julie Gilberto-Brady (Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area); Carol Benson (Four Rivers / Annapolis, London Town and South County Heritage Area); Gail Owings (Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area); Meg Baco (Maryland Milestones / Anacostia Trails Heritage Area); Brigitte Carty (Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway); Lisa Challenger (Beach to Bay Heritage Area); Shauntee Daniels (Baltimore National Heritage Area); Kim Folk (Mountain Gateway to the West Heritage Area)

**Others Present:** Wayne Clark, outgoing representative of the President of the Senate; Aaron Marcavitch, outgoing staff to Maryland Milestones/Anacostia Trails Heritage Area; Reverend

Martha Macgill, representing the Emmanuel Parish of the Episcopal Church; Ginny Cornwell, representing the Tilghman Volunteer Fire Company

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Robert S. McCord, Secretary, MD Department of Planning and Chair of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

**RECOGNITION OF DEPARTING MEMBER, MR. WAYNE CLARK**

Mr. McCord recognized Mr. Wayne Clark, a departing member of the Authority. Mr. McCord noted contributions to the Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland Heritage Area Authority. Mr. Clark had served on the Authority for 13 years.

Many members of the Authority thanked Mr. Clark for his service and Mr. Clark expressed his gratitude for serving the Trust and the Authority.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Ms. Ruffner introduced the new members of the Authority, Dr. Dennis Doster, Mr. Nicholas Redding, and Ms. Mary Anne Harms. Each new Authority member introduced themselves. Dr. Doster and Mr. Redding are not able to vote at this meeting because they have not yet taken their oaths.

Ms. Ruffner then introduced the new heritage area directors, Mx. Megan Baco and Ms. Lisa Challenger. They introduced themselves and expressed excitement about working with the Authority.

Ms. Ruffner conducted the roll call, determining that – with 2 MHAA members absent, and 12 voting members present – there was a quorum present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM January 14, 2021 MEETING**

**Resolution R-100 to Approve Minutes from January 14, 2021 Meeting**

Mr. McCord called for a motion to approve the January 14, 2021 MHAA meeting minutes. Mr. Pete Leshner offered the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the January 14, 2021 meeting minutes as presented.**

The motion was seconded by Mr. Burt Kummerow and approved unanimously with no abstentions.

**RATIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DECISION FROM FEBRUARY 2021**

Resolution R-200 to Ratify the February 16, 2021 Action Taken by the Executive Committee to approve a FY 2021 Emergency Grant to the Thurmont Historical Society

Ms. Ruffner described the emergency grant to the Thurmont Historical Society. The Society's HVAC system had failed and needed to be repaired before the start of the summer. The Executive Committee reviewed the request for \$6,817 and unanimously approved the emergency grant by email on February 16.

Mr. Pete Lescher made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority ratifies the action taken by the Executive Committee via email vote on February 16, 2021 to award a FY 2021 emergency grant in the amount of \$6,817 to the Thurmont Historical Society for emergency HVAC repairs at the Creeger House.**

Mr. Kummerow seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously with no abstentions.

**MANAGEMENT REPORT** (Jennifer Rufner, MHAA Administrator)

Ms. Ruffner reported that as of February 28, 2021 the current available balance in the MHAA Financing Fund was \$153,107.09. Subtracting the amount reserved for operating (\$124,443.32) and the remaining FY 21 Emergency Grant Funds (\$1,183.00) that leaves a balance of \$27,480.77.

**FY 2021 - FY 2022 Grant Processing Update (Ennis Smith)**

Ms. Smith reported on the staff's progress processing FY 2021 grants. There were a total of 118 grants, including emergency grants and reserve list grants. 105 of those grants have been fully processed while 3 are waiting on grantee signatures and 9 have been signed but are awaiting execution. One grant is already closed.

Mr. Robert Campbell thanked the staff for processing this volume of grants.

For FY 2022, intent to apply forms were due in January and the final local heritage deadline is Friday, the 9th of April. So far, there are 161 full applications for project grants and several more to be submitted. Last year, the grants panel reviewed 149 grants so the current number of grants has already exceeded last year's.

**Creation of Subcommittees for Reviewing Management and Marketing Grants**

Based on an agreement from the previous meeting, Ms. Ruffner discussed the creation of subcommittees to review the management and marketing grants. She asked for more volunteers for both committees and informed the volunteers that a training was coming mid-May.

**Update on the Grants Review Panel**

Ms. Ruffner updated the Authority on the status of the FY 2022 grants review panel, including the addition of six new members. Three openings from non-state agencies were filled by six new individuals, each with their own diverse background. Training for the panel will begin in April and continue into May. Heritage Areas will have the opportunity to present to the grants review panels to discuss their local priorities.

**Update on the Marketing Working Group**

Ms. Ruffner updated the Authority on the status of the Marketing Working Group. The group has produced a list of goals, which Ms. Ruffner presented to the Authority. Currently, staff is working to provide a summary of the organization's identity. As the group begins to address these goals, they expect to hire a consultant to provide professional insight and support.

**Update on the Racial Equity Working Group**

Ms. Ruffner updated the Authority on the Racial Equity Working Group. She discussed the progress that the working group had made in analyzing the program and explained that the procurement process for a group facilitator was moving smoothly after several false starts. The

request for proposals closed on the 5th of April and technical review of the candidates was scheduled for the following week.

### **Update on Data from the Racial Equity Working Group**

Mr. Arvizu shared analysis from the Racial Equity Working Group. Based on the group's demographic survey conducted last winter, the group had analyzed funding discrepancies in funding opportunities based on the demographics of the applicant's staff and board.

Responses to the survey had been divided into 5 groups: black led organizations, organizations with a majority black staff, organizations with a majority black board, organizations with a majority white staff and board, and the program average. Staff compared the ratio of organizations that applied for grants to those who received grants in each of the 5 categories. The results were as follows:

- Black led organizations had received a grant at a rate of 40%
- Organizations with a majority black staff had received a grant at a rate of 45%
- Organizations with a majority black board had received a grant at a rate of 50%
- Organizations with a majority white board and staff had received a grant at a rate of 80%
- The program average, based on the survey, was 75%

Mr. Dan Spedden asked if this data reflected the Authority's change to match requirements.

Ms. Ruffner explained that the survey behind this data was sent to all past applicants whose email was in the program's grantmaking software, so it did not reflect the recent match changes.

### **Update on Upcoming Boundary Amendments**

Ms. Ruffner updated the group on upcoming boundary amendments, including Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area, Passages of the Western Potomac, and Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. MMGTWHA's amendment will be on the July agenda, the others will take longer to be finalized.

### **Distribution of the Program Impact Study**

Ms. Ruffner explained the distribution of the program impact study. Reports had been sent to members of the Authority and the legislature, including hard copies to the budget committee and leadership team. Each heritage area has also received copies of the main report and their individual reports.

### **Update on the Collection of Program Metrics and 5-Year Plans**

Ms. Ruffner explained that the collection of program impact metrics will be starting in FY 2023, so that heritage areas can adequately prepare. As a result, FY 2024 would be the first year that the Program would report out on these metrics.

Ms. Ruffner then discussed the creation of individual 5-year plans. Each heritage area will begin producing a 5-year plan in FY 2023 to be implemented in FY 2024. Staff is working on developing a new template for the 5-year plan.

### **Direct Performance Metrics & 360 Survey**

Ms. Ruffner addressed the Heritage Area Direct Performance Evaluations for FY17-18. She explained that these metrics were established in the 2010-20 Strategic Plan. FY17-18 were the most recent years where all management entities had closed their management grants, and the metrics are tied to the management grants. Each heritage area either met or exceeded the benchmark in all categories. Ms. Ruffner mentioned that this process does not seem like the most useful exercise, since all groups seem to meet or exceed the benchmark and the data in question is often outdated.

Ms. Ruffner reported on the 360 Survey, which was also set out in the 2010-20 Strategic Plan. The survey had been sent to all members of the Authority, staff, members of each heritage areas' board, and heritage area staff. Overall, the responses were very positive. Ms. Ruffner discussed the major themes, including the overall positive sentiment and concerns over the usefulness of the survey. Ms. Ruffner also reported on demographic information, showing that the program is overwhelmingly white.

The group discussed the issue of communication and the concerns that respondents often felt they didn't have enough information to complete the survey. There was also discussion of a need to revise the survey or reconsider it, if it wasn't found to be useful.

Mr. McCord called to make a note next time that the survey was planned to review how it can be improved.

### **MARYLAND COALITION OF HERITAGE AREAS (MCoHA) REPORT (Sara Rogers, Co-Chair, MCoHA)**

Ms. Sarah Rogers updated the Authority on the action of the Maryland Coalition of Heritage Areas. She informed the Authority that the Coalition plans to attend the Maryland Association of

Counties Conference in August. She added that the Coalition had carried out great legislative outreach, led by Shauntee Daniels. Finally, she noted that Julie Gilberto-Brady is retiring and welcomed Mx. Baco as the executive director of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area and Ms. Lisa Challenger as the executive director of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area.

Ms. Kim Folk, director of the Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area, provided an update on the Garrett Heritage Kids Club, a program aimed at engaging children in age-appropriate heritage activities. A new brochure will be available at many heritage sites, with a scavenger hunt, kid friendly trails, and fun facts about the heritage area. The brochure will be rolled out with a website, with more information and a kids newsletter.

Ms. Folk explained that MMGTWHA is also producing a new brochure that provides comprehensive information on the heritage area. This brochure replaces several other individual brochures and combines all of the essential information about the heritage area.

Kim concluded by mentioning that 2021 is the 10 year anniversary of MMGTWHA and a celebration is planned for early October, including a photo contest that celebrates the heritage area's themes.

Mr. Aaron Marcavitch introduced Mx. Baco, the new executive director of ATHA.

Mx Baco introduced himself and thanked Mr. Marcavitch for his work at ATHA.

Ms. Rogers updated the group on the Southern Maryland Heritage Area's process towards becoming a national heritage area, as Lucille Walker was not able to attend the meeting. The legislation is in Congress and moving forward.

Ms. Rogers reported that Heritage Montgomery had just rolled out an African American heritage driving and bike tour this month.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **Resolution R-300 to Approve a Request by the Beach to Bay Heritage Area and Somerset and Worcester Counties to Amend the Boundary of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area**

Ms. Ruffner addressed the Beach to Bay Heritage Area boundary amendment. This small amendment would add two sites: the area around Mt. Zion Memorial Church and the West Ocean City Commercial Fishing Harbor. The amendment received no testimony, good or bad. Ms. Ruffner highlighted the proposed sites.

Ms. Challenger added that this amendment is very small and that these two sites are historically significant.

Mr. Leshner made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority approves—in accordance with Sections 13-1008(10) and 13-1111(m) of the Financial Institutions Article of the Code of Maryland, and COMAR 4.29.02.05.C – the request by the Beach to Bay Heritage Area and Somerset and Worcester Counties to amend the boundaries of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area to include the area surrounding the Mt. Zion Church on Polks Road in Somerset County, and the Ocean City West Commercial Harbor in Worcester County.**

Dr. Baker seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with no absentions.

Resolution R-400 to Approve a Request by the Annapolis, London Town and South County (FourRivers) Heritage Area and Anne Arundel County to Amend the Boundary of the Annapolis, London Town and South County (Four Rivers) Heritage Area

Ms. Ruffner introduced the Four Rivers Heritage Area boundary amendment. She explained that this has been a multi-year process that was extensively researched. Five main areas have been proposed: the North County African American Trail, several recreational trails, two clusters, twelve “stand-alone” sites and a ½ mile buffer to the existing boundary. Twelve different pieces of testimony had been received, all in support of the amendment. Ms. Ruffner then highlighted the proposed additions.

Dr. Carol Benson explained that this has been a long and detailed process. She stated that this will greatly increase the heritage area’s reach into Anne Arundel County, with 5 new categories of sites to address new themes and opportunities.

There was a brief discussion of the robust process, and a few questions were asked.

Mr. Campbell made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority approves—in accordance with Sections 13-1008(10) and 13- 1111(m) of the Financial Institutions Article of the Code of Maryland, and COMAR 14.29.02.05.C – the request by the Annapolis, London Town and South County (Four Rivers) Heritage Area and Anne Arundel County to amend the boundaries of the**

**Annapolis, London Town and South County (Four Rivers) Heritage Area to include a half-mile buffer along the existing border, the North County African American Heritage Trail, the Mid-County Cluster, the Jug Bay Cluster, 3 recreational trails and 12 heritage tourism sites.**

Mr. Kummerow seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Resolution R-500 to Approve a Request by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, Washington County, and the City of Hagerstown to Amend the Boundary of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Ms. Ruffner introduced the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area boundary amendment, including the Hagerstown Aviation Museum and areas around Hagerstown. Four pieces of testimony were received, all in favor of the amendment. Ms. Ruffner highlighted the proposed sites.

Ms. Elizabeth Shatto explained that the Hagerstown Aviation Museum includes stories about the Balloon Corps in 1862, but that the story also includes interesting narratives from the Second World War. As a result, this site would allow the heritage area to expand its focus into the broader history of the region while still using the Civil War as a hook.

Dr. Baker made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority approves—in accordance with Sections 13-1008(10) and 13- 1111(m) of the Financial Institutions Article of the Code of Maryland, and COMAR 4.29.02.05.C.– the request by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, Washington County, and the City of Hagerstown, to amend the boundaries of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area to include the Hagerstown Aviation Museum, and three recently annexed portions of the City of Hagerstown.**

Ms. Elizabeth Hughes seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with a single abstention from Dan Spedden, who recused himself from the vote.

Resolution R-700 to Approve a Request by the Tilghman Volunteer Fire Company to Revise the Scope of Work of the FY 2021 Grant for the Knapp's Narrows Bridge Mural project

Mr. Arvizu discussed an amendment to the FY 2021 grant “Knapps Narrows Bridge Mural Project”. The grantee had originally planned to place a mural on the counterweight of the Knapp’s Narrows bridge. Although the grantee had originally secured permission from the Federal Highway Administration to use the site, it was later determined that the site may be a safety hazard. The grantee has since secured a new site for the mural, on the property 6129 Tilghman Island Road.

The group discussed the ownership of the newly proposed property, and were assured that there was a letter of consent from the property owner who was closing on the property that day.

Ms. Ginny Cornwell, the project lead, discussed the process and provided details on the timeline.

Mr. Leshar made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the request by the Tilghman Volunteer Fire Company to revise the Scope of Work for the FY 2021 grant project titled “Knapp’s Narrows Bridge Mural Project” to allow the funds to be utilized at the new project location, a building at 6129 Tilghman Island Road, as permission to place the mural on the Knapp’s Narrows Bridge was not granted by the Federal Highway Administration.**

Ms. Elizabeth Fitsimmons seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Resolution R-600 to Approve a Request by the Emmanuel Parish of the Episcopal Church to Revise the Scope of Work of the FY 2021 Grant for the Conversion of the Barkdoll House to a History Museum/Tour Center project.

Ms. Smith introduced the amendment to the FY 2021 grant “Conversion of the Barkdoll House to a History Museum/Tour Center”. She explained that the grantee originally planned to convert the Barkdoll House into an exhibit space for visitors coming to see the church. Since receiving the grant, the grantee had been approached by the property owners of the adjacent Hoye House. The Hoye House is a historic building which is larger than the original property and is already ADA accessible. The grantee would like to shift the grant funding to design an outdoor green space in the parking lot of the Hoye House to allow them to accept visitors outdoors as soon as possible.

Rev. Martha Macgill explained that this amendment would complete the campus of the Emmanuel Episcopal Church and that the proposed site is at a superior location and could serve as a major community center for Cumberland.

Mr. Spedden made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the request by the Emmanuel Parish of the Protestant Episcopal Church to revise the Scope of Work for the FY 2021 grant project titled “Conversion of Barkdoll House to a History Museum/Tour Center” to allow the funds to be utilized at the new project location, to create an outdoor greenspace and visitor reception area in front of the Barkdoll House.**

Mr. Campbell seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Resolution R-800 to Approve the Policy on Certification of Structures Located in a Certified Heritage Area as Contributing to the Significance of the Heritage Area for Purposes of the Maryland Historic Revitalization Tax Credit.

Ms. Ruffner briefed the Authority on the tax credit program and explained that the policy is codified not in the regulations of MHAA but rather in the regulations of the Historic Revitalization Tax Credit Program. The Office of the Attorney General and MHT tax credit staff had looked at the current regulations and worked with MHAA staff to revise the policy to be more accessible and inline with the current regulations.

Previously, each heritage area were to create limiting standards which determined what constituted an eligible property for a non-eligible structure to be considered for the tax credit. The proposed change to the policy would allow the Authority to designate non-listed properties as eligible if they meet the MHAA Targeted Investment Criteria, And non-eligible properties can be certified as having significant heritage tourism value by utilizing a core set of criteria in the new policy. Properties will be considered if they provide visitor services, local character, heritage tourism, or clear economic benefit.

For a property owner to receive the credit, the applicant must first secure approval from their local heritage area director and then be certified by the Authority before they can submit an application to MHT.

There was discussion to clarify the details of the policy, and how it might relate to grant projects.

Robert Campbell made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the “Policy on Certification of Structures**

**Located in a Certified Heritage Area as Contributing to the Significance of the Heritage Area for Purposes of the Maryland Historic Revitalization Tax Credit” included with the meeting materials.**

Ms. Amy Seitz seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Review of Emergency Grants**

Ms. Ruffner introduced the first discussion item, the review of emergency grants. The Office of the Attorney General had identified that the current ratification process could create a situation where a project is completed before being approved by the Authority votes on it. Alternatives include having votes by email, holding special meetings of the Authority, or requiring emergency grants to wait until the next meeting.

Mr. McCord explained that the original intent was to be able to react quickly and encouraged the Authority to consider keeping the executive review rather than forcing everyone to review every emergency grant. Mr. McCord expressed concern with having to wait until the next meeting.

A number of options were discussed by the group. Following the discussion, Ms. Ruffner summarized a short and long term solution based on the discussion. In the short term, the Authority will call a virtual meeting, should an emergency grant application be received prior to the next meeting and in the long term, the Authority will look into changing the by-laws. MHAA staff will work with OAG staff to propose changes for the Authority’s consideration.

### **Covid-19 Response**

Mr. Arvizu reported on metrics from the April 2021 COVID Impact survey. The survey found that partners and stakeholders had been significantly impacted by the economic impact of the virus. The average loss of revenue had increased from \$30,000 to \$168,000 and more than 75% of organizations had considered laying off staff to remain economically viable.

Ms. Ruffner explained that many respondents expressed a desire for economic relief, technical assistance, or a listening group.

Ms. Ruffner presented staff recommendations for COVID relief actions. Staff recommended allowing mini-grants recipients to use their funds for emergency operating costs at the discretion

of the heritage areas, allowing FY 2022 grantees to convert up to \$20,000 of grant funds to emergency operating costs, and allowing heritage area management entities to have multiple marketing grants open at once. She noted that emergency operating costs can be incurred between March 5, 2020 through 90 days following the end of the Maryland State of Emergency, which is ongoing.

Mr. Leshar mentioned that the 360 Survey showed that people were pleased with the COVID response and continuing these measures would be a good policy.

There was discussion of how the tourism industry and outdoor recreation were beginning to reopen, and tourist numbers were increasing, with significantly increased demand for outdoor activities.

There was discussion of what constitutes operating funds, and the needs of organizations that may not have a project grant. Ms. Ruffner noted that with very little funding remaining in the Financing Fund, another round of emergency grants was not possible, even though there would certainly be demand.

Mr. Pete Leshar made the following motion:

**RESOLVED, that the authority approves the recommendations provided by staff in the memo “MHAA Briefing Re: COVID19 Relief Phase 3” included in the meeting materials.**

Mr. Spedden seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

### **Honoraria for Members of the Grants Review Panel**

Ms. Ruffner introduced the proposal for honoraria for grants review panelists. Staff put forward a proposal based on the Maryland States Arts Council for paying grant reviewers for their time as requested by the Authority at the January meeting. Each non-state appointed panelist could choose to receive \$50 for all training, \$100 per grants review meeting, and \$200 for review of the applications. Travel costs would also be reimbursable for all panelists. In total, if all non-state appointed members accepted the honorarium it would cost \$7,650, which would come from the operating budget.

Ms. Seitz made the following motion:

**Resolved, that the Authority approves Honoraria for Non-State Grant Review Panelists as put forward in the memo “MHAA Briefing re: Honoraria 3” included in the meeting materials.**

Mr. Leshar seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

**New Business and Announcements**

Mr. McCord called for member announcements and new business.

Dr. Baker stated that they were opening FY22 grants for bikeways.

**Adjourn**

Mr. McCord adjourned the meeting at 12:42.