

**Minutes of the
One Hundred and Second Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
January 11, 2024**

The one hundred and second meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened on January 11, 2024 virtually and streamed live to the public.

Authority Members/Designees Present

Rebecca L. Flora (MD Department of Planning Secretary and Chairperson for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority), Natalie Chabot (Representative for MD Greenways); Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer); Robert D. Campbell (Governor's Appointee for Historic Preservation and serving as the Vice Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority); Dennis Doster (Governor's Appointee for Heritage Tourism); Nicholas Redding (President of the Senate representative); Melissa Archer (representing MD Department of Housing & Community Development Secretary Jake Day); Julie Schablitsky (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative); Pete Leshner (MD Association of Counties representative); Elizabeth Fitzsimmons (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Kevin Anderson); Mary Anne Harms (Speaker of the House representative)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Peter Ramsey (representing MD State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury); Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks); John A. Kinnaird (MD Municipal League representative); Geoffrey Newman (representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Acting Secretary Sanjay Rai)

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 (Office of the Attorney General)

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Rebecca Flora convened the meeting at 1:01 and thanked everyone for attending.

Mr. Andrew Arvizu conducted the roll call.

Sec. Flora began with a brief update on the start of the legislative session. She remained optimistic about funding for the program, but noted this will be a challenging session for all agencies.

Action Items

Resolution R-100 to Approve Minutes from October 26, 2023 meeting.

Sec. Flora asked for comments on minutes of the October 26 MHAA meeting.

Ms. Natalie Chabot asked for a minor correction on page 12 of the minutes. She noted that her comments in the minutes regarding the grant review algorithm had been mischaracterized. She requested the emphasis of her comments be shifted from specifically the review algorithm to the grant program more broadly.

Sec. Flora called for a motion for the approval of the October Authority meeting minutes as amended. Ms. Chabot made the following motion, which Mr. Bob Campbell seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the October 26, 2023 Minutes as amended.

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Sec Flora shared her thanks to Ms. Brigitte Carty for hosting the in-person October meeting.

Resolution R-200 to Approve a Request by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and Carroll County to Amend the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

Mr. Arvizu introduced the request from the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and Carroll County to add the Ellsworth Cemetery to the heritage area. He noted the proximity of the site to the current heritage area's boundary, and the alignment of the site with the heritage area's management plan.

Ms. Emily Heubner provided additional context on the cemetery and discussed the heritage area's long relationship with the city of Westminster, where the cemetery now resides. She introduced Ms. Diane Boettcher, one of the volunteers who has maintained and administered the cemetery.

Ms. Diane Boettcher provided a brief history of the property, from its incorporation in 1862, to the notable individuals buried there, to the disrepair and restoration of the cemetery. She also discussed ongoing outreach efforts to share the story of the cemetery with the public, as well as plans for the site after it has been restored.

Sec. Flora asked about the vacant plot of land to the north and west of the property.

Ms. Boettcher explained that the adjacent property is in private ownership, but the nearby businesses have been good neighbors.

Ms. Liz Shatto added that the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area had historically contained all of the boundaries of the City of Westminster. She noted that the cemetery was initially left out of the City's boundary, but now that it's been incorporated, this is an opportunity to address an issue of equity.

Mr. Campbell agreed and expressed his support.

Ms. Mary Anne Harms asked about the future for the land on either side of the cemetery, expressing concern that there may be encroachment from the commercial landowners.

Ms. Boettcher discussed the potential of an easement to prevent future development.

Mr. Dennis Doster asked if there were potential grave sites outside of the modern-day boundary of the cemetery.

Ms. Boettcher noted that ground penetrating radar work has been ongoing to see the extent of the cemetery. She suspects, based on anecdotal evidence, that there are additional bodies.

Mr. Pete Leshner made the following motion, which Mr. Bob Campbell Seconded.

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 Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and Carroll County to Amend the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area to include the Ellsworth Cemetery

The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Sec Flora thanked Diane. Diane extended an invitation for the Authority to visit and learn more!

Resolution R-300 to approve the reservation of \$100,000 from MHAA's FY25 annual appropriation, to be used to fund emergency grants in accordance with MHAA's Emergency Grant Policy.

Sec. Flora introduced the motion to approve the reservation of \$100,000 from the program's annual appropriation to fund emergency grants for Fiscal Year 2025. She shared that the Executive Committee has been reviewing emergency grants.

Sec. Flora asked about the logistics of the state budget, and how this would impact the appropriation.

Ms. Ariane Hofstedt noted that this \$100,000 was contingent on the approval of MHAA's budget at the state level and would go into effect for Fiscal Year 2025.

Sec. Flora asked for questions.

Mr. Campbell asked for the status of the financing fund.

Ms. Hofsted explained that there is \$343,000 in roll-over emergency funds or underspent grant funding from previous years, and an additional \$72,000 in current year emergency grant funds that have not been spent. In total, there are around \$415,000 in unspent emergency grant funds and underspent or returned grants.

Mr. Campbell acknowledged that adding an additional \$100,000 to the fund may be excessive. He also noted that the need for emergency funding varies year to year and recounted the challenge of finding emergency funds during Covid. He concluded by suggesting that the additional funds are added this year, but the Authority may want to consider setting a maximum fund in reserve.

Sec. Flora agreed that setting a savings goal would be appropriate but did not hear recommendations for the goal coming from the Authority today.

Ms. Brigitte Carty expressed concern about maintaining a significant balance in the financing fund, as those funds may be recaptured by the state.

Ms. Lucille Walker expressed support for Ms. Carty's opinion.

Sec. Flora agreed with the concern and reiterated the importance of a savings goal.

Ms. Melissa Archer cautioned that an excessive reserve of funds may influence decision making, making the Authority more likely to approve emergency grants. She suggested the funds would be better spent going towards project grants.

Sec. Flora noted that having a sizable emergency fund is beneficial for unexpected crises like the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. Cambell shared an eagerness to get funding to project grants.

Ms. Chabot agreed with Sec. Flora regarding preparing for unexpected emergencies. She cited concerns over climate change and unexpected weather patterns impacting historical properties.

Ms. Carty asked if there had ever been a need for the full emergency grant appropriation and suggested that the funds be used for project grants.

Sec. Flora called for a vote on the motion as it was worded.

Ms. Elizabeth Hughes made the following motion to approve the appropriation as worded, which Ms. Chabot seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the reservation of \$100,000 from MHAA's FY25 annual appropriation, to be used to fund emergency grants in accordance with MHAA's Emergency Grant Policy.

Ms. Archer, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Redding, Mr. Doster, and Ms. Schablitsky were opposed.

Ms. Hughes, Ms. Fitzsimmons, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Harms, and Ms. Chabot were in favor.

There were no abstentions.

With a tie, the motion went to Secretary Sec. Flora who voted to approve the motion. She explained that the Executive Committee will be working to revise the Emergency Grant policy to have clearer guidance for next meeting.

MHAA Chairperson Report

Sec. Flora reported that an MHAA Emergency Grant from the Annapolis Maritime Museum was reviewed and approved for funding on December 14, 2023 by the Executive Committee.

Resolution R-100 FY24 Emergency Grant Request from Annapolis Maritime Museum

RESOLVED, that the MHAA Executive Committee approves the request for MHAA Emergency Grant funding to the Annapolis Maritime Museum, Inc. for \$17,773 for emergency repairs to a damaged ceiling that was caused by a water leak and the need for a new ADA walkway that is being required as part of the permitting process to connect the boardwalk with the pavilion. Both of these activities will take place at the Annapolis Maritime Museum Park Campus located at 7300 Edgewood Road, Annapolis, MD 21403. These expenses are to be funded with FY 2024 MHAA emergency grant funds. All eligible expenses may be covered by the grant and required matching funds.

Mr. Campbell noted that he had recused himself from discussing the Annapolis Maritime Museum Emergency Grant, on account of his ties to the institution.

Sec. Flora reiterated that the process emphasized the need for additional discussions regarding the policies of the Emergency Grant program.

MHAA Management Report

Financing Fund

Ms. Hofstedt updated the Authority on the current balance of the financing fund. The fund is currently at \$343,685.30, which is an increase of \$5,000 since the last meeting, on account of a grant that had closed under budget.

Block Grants

Ms. Hofstedt discussed the Authority's previous vote to remove the disbursement report and mid-project report from MHAA Block Grants. After checking with MHT's finance office, it was determined that for auditing purposes they require a written request to authorize a payment. Therefore, the program is only able to remove the mid-project report requirement and a disbursement request will still need to be submitted. In an effort to provide the heritage areas with as much flexibility as possible, the disbursement request may now be submitted at any point during their grant, regardless of where they are in their mini-grant process.

FY24 Grant Agreements

Mr. Arvizu discussed the status of the FY24 grant agreements. They shared that 96 of the 102 grants were executed or out for signature. This is in comparison to around 25 grants at this time last year. He noted several of the changes that have made the process easier.

Ms. Hofstedt added that all of the over-the-target supplemental operating grants to heritage areas have been executed.

Mr. Leshar thanked the staff for the progress that has been made.

FY25 Grant Updates

Ms. Martha Waldron discussed the FY25 grant round. Including the January 26 intent to apply deadline and the March 4 full application deadline. She discussed the grant review process and provided an update on MHAA's grant workshops in December and January.

Ms. Waldron then discussed changes to the grant review process. She explained that this year, responding to feedback from the Authority and heritage area directors, state grant review panelists will be organized into 8 small groups comprised of four to five members each. These groups will be responsible for reading all the same grants, and these grants will be from one or two heritage areas. This will allow the panelists to become more familiar with the heritage areas for which they are reading grant applications. Heritage area directors will be able to meet with their respective group(s) ahead of the grant review meeting in July to provide information about their local priorities and rankings.

Additionally, the way that MHAA staff tabulate scores will be changing slightly. The format of the score sheet will remain unchanged, but at the administrative level, the way the scores are inputted into the algorithm will be adjusted to better mimic the local review process – rankings instead of raw scores will be used. This will guard against any over generous or harsh reviews at the state-level in the new small group format. Ms. Waldron shared that this has been discussed with the heritage areas and tests have been conducted on this proposed change, and that this will ensure more local heritage area priorities will be funded.

Ms. Hofstedt added that Grant Review Panelists are currently being recruited, with a goal of filling gaps in geography and expertise.

Ms. Hofstedt discussed plans for demographic data collection after applicants submit their full application. A short demographic survey will be sent out as a separate email to applicants after their application has been received. This short survey is a small first step towards the kind of data collection that the Authority agreed to that came from the Racial Equity Working Group recommendations.

Ms. Chabot asked that changes to the grant program be sent out in advance of meetings.

Ms. Hofstedt is happy to provide a summary of the changes ahead of future meetings.

MHAA Strat Plan

Ms. Hofstedt provided an update on the MAA strategic plan. She shared that the RFP has been drafted and will be made live as soon as possible. The strategic planning process will take place over the next year. She shared that she had completed all of her one-on-one meetings with heritage area directors.

Sec. Flora asked about the timing of the MHAA retreat.

Ms. Hofstedt explained that May still looks like the time for the retreat, but that the plans are still tentative pending the hire of the strategic planning consultant.

Sec. Flora shared that statewide procurement changes may make this process easier.

Ms. Hughes asked fellow Authority members about their experiences procuring the services of consultants.

Ms. Fitzsimmons explained that one of the big challenges with Commerce has been controlling the scope to be able to ask for what is really needed, especially since the exact dollar amount of the RFP cannot be listed.

Discussion Items

No discussion items were raised.

Member Announcements

No announcements were made.

New Business

Ms. Waldron shared that she will be on parental leave ahead of the arrival of her baby in March.

The Authority expressed their warm congratulations for Ms. Waldron.

Report from the Maryland Coalition of Heritage Areas

Ms. Walker shared that Coalition members are working hard within their local heritage areas to support the FY25 grant round. With the start of session, the Coalition is working hard to secure funding for the program. She added that she was happy to see the great work being done by her colleagues and the Authority.

Ms. Walker expressed concern about the branding of MHAA. She noted that there is often confusion with MHT and asked that that issue be addressed.

Ms. Carty explained that the Coalition is speaking regularly with legislators and needs to be prepared in advance. Ms. Carty called on the staff to be as transparent as possible about MHAA's budget.

Ms. Walker noted the \$300,000 of MHAA's budget, which is transferred at the discretion of the Authority's chair to fund MHT's Non-Capital Grant Program. She asked about the future of those funds.

Ms. Carty expressed concern regarding the partial funding of grants. She called on the Authority to make a formal decision regarding partial funding and asked for clarification on the rules of partial funding.

Ms. Hofstedt explained that there is a place in the FY25 application under the project impact section for applicants to comment for themselves on what would happen if their grant was only partially funded. Additionally, MHAA staff plans to reach out and work directly with grants selected for partial funding should the Grants Review Panel choose to award in this way.

Ms. Carty asked if the Authority was comfortable ceding this level of power to the Grants Review Panel.

Sec. Flora clarified that MHAA still holds the authority over which grants are funded, while the grants review panel is just making a list of recommendations, based on their review of the applications.

Ms. Hofstedt reminded the Authority that a list of recommendations for funding from the Grant Review Panel will be sent to the Authority before the July 11th meeting. More time has been built into the review schedule this year to give the Authority time to comment and inquire about reductions and other funding decisions.

Sec. Flora asked staff to put together a fact sheet summarizing MHAA and the coming grant round.

Ms. Hofstedt noted that the annual report will be coming out and may serve that purpose.

Sec. Flora discussed the logistics of getting the report finalized.

Ms. Hughes discussed budget hearings and noted that it will be interesting to see what questions are asked regarding this year's budget.

Director Highlights

Ms. Shauntee Daniels thanked everyone for the hard work being done to support the program. She shared a number of upcoming heritage events coming to her area, including a screening of the film *Eroding History*.

Ms. Dee Dee Ritchie shared information on the PACE Reception in Annapolis to discuss heritage tourism projects. She provided an update on the ongoing county wide boundary expansion.

Ms. Walker shared that their national management plan is moving forward at a record place.

Ms. Carty thanked everyone for joining them at the October meeting and shared that they are continuing to push for the river crossing and trail development.

Ms. Sara Rogers shared a brief update on new transportation brochure. Next meeting, she will be looking at a boundary amendment for a historic dairy farm dedicated to the preservation of Nepalese culture.

Ms. Liz Shatto thanked everyone for passing the boundary amendment. She shared that HCWHA was able to use over-the-target funding for a new staff member, Olivia Peterson. Emily Heubner is now director of Operations and Programs and will be taking the lead on these projects. Liz will be stepping back and focusing on high level planning.

Mx. Meagan Baco discussed the completion of a trolley trail connecting existing trails through Hyattsville into the arts district.

Ms. Holly Gilpin discussed ongoing 250th initiatives and partnerships for oral history at the visitor center.

Ms. Gail Owings discussed plans for new boundary amendment.

Ms. Lisa Challenger discussed new free certified interpretive guide training to groups within the heritage area.

Ms. Carol Benson discussed the 16th annual Maryland Day Celebration, running from March 22nd to 24th. There will be 40 sites participating in the collaborative event.

Ms. Hofstedt introduced Ms. Amber Sanders as the new director of Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area.

Adjourn

Sec. Flora thanked everyone for sharing these updates and for everyone's hard work.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Mr. Leshner. The motion passed unanimously.