

Minutes of the
Fifth Meeting of the
MHAA Racial Equity Working Group
April 1, 2021

The fifth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Area Authority (MHAA) Racial Equity Working Group was held virtually on April 1, 2021.

Attendees Present

Robert McCord (Secretary of the Maryland Department of Planning and Chair of MHAA), Reverend Tamara England Wilson (Chair, Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture), Walkiria Pool (Chair, Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs), Frederick Nnoma-Addison (Commissioner for the Governor's Commission on African Affairs), Shauntee Daniels (Executive Director of the Baltimore National Heritage Area and representative of the Maryland Coalition of Heritage Areas), Elizabeth Hughes (State Historic Preservation Officer, Director of Maryland Historical Trust, and MHAA member), Steven Lee (Commissioner for the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture), and Chanel Compton (Executive Director of the Banneker-Douglass Museum and staff to the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture), Wayne Clark (MHAA member), Aaron Shapiro (Executive Director of Patapsco Heritage Greenway and representative of the Maryland Coalition of Heritage Areas)

MHAA Staff Present

Jennifer Ruffner, Ennis Barbary Smith, Andrew Arvizu, Bernadette Pruitt

Welcome and Introductions

Secretary Robert McCord opened the meeting at 1:05pm and thanked everyone for joining.

Jennifer Ruffner introduced the working group's newest member Aaron Shapiro, who is the executive director of Patapsco Heritage Greenway and one of two representatives of the Maryland Coalition of Heritage Areas.

Everyone introduced themselves.

Update on the Request for Proposal (RFP)

Ms. Ruffner told the group that the third RFP for a facilitator for the group was underway. The RFP closes on the 5th of April and will then be turned over to the technical review committee. Working group members were invited to join the technical review process, which should begin in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Steven Lee and Commissioner Frederick Nnoma-Addison asked about when the facilitator might start and what their timelines for the work might look like.

Ms. Ruffner explained that they would start no sooner than mid-May and that each proposal should set forth a timeline which will be evaluated.

Survey Analysis

Mr. Arvizu discussed the analysis that the staff had conducted on the demographic data the working group had collected. He explained that despite a large number of responses, the sample size was too small to make sophisticated, statistically significant statements about trends in the data. Instead, MHAA staff had produced a graph of the percentage of respondents who had applied for and received grants, divided by the respondents' demographics.

Respondents were divided into five categories: Black led organizations, Black/African American majority staff, Black/African American majority board, White majority board and staff, and the program overall. Staff then divided the number of respondents who had received a grant by the total number who had applied, to get a rough rate of funding.

Mr. Arvizu explained that the results were as follows:

Black led organization: 40% funded to 60% unfunded
Black/African American majority staff: 45% funded to 55% unfunded
Black/African American majority board: 50% funded to 50% unfunded
White majority board and staff: 80% funded to 20% unfunded
Program overall: 75% funded to 25% unfunded

Mr. Arvizu concluded by explaining potential sources for error in the analysis. First, the sample size of 184 was insignificant in comparison to the total number of applications MHAA receives per year, roughly 200-300. Second, the wording of the survey did not account for repeat funding, only whether respondents had ever received funding. Finally, the control only accounted for all of the respondents, and not for the program average overall.

Mr. Wayne Clark and Mr. McCord asked staff to look at the grantees of MHT's African American Heritage Preservation Program (AAHPP) for potential overlap and future partners.

Mr. Lee encouraged the group to stay focused on MHAA grants, but also felt that if other programs are going to be analyze, it should be many state agencies rather than just AAHPP. Mr. Lee also cautioned that just because an organization has a majority African American staff, does not mean that those staff members are in a position of power. He suggested a future survey to analyze this issue.

Mr. Nnoma-Addison asked if the group had established a shared definition of African American. Does it include African born?

Mr. Lee said that his definition includes all members of the African diaspora in the term African American. He explained that the term refers more to a cultural experience.

Ms. Ennis Smith pointed out that in the context of the survey, African American and Black fell under the same category.

Mr. Clark hoped to find a correlation between fewer MHAA grants from Black led organizations and the start of AAHPP grants. He suggested that one of the reasons for the disparity in funding may be that Black led organizations may be applying to AAHPP instead of MHAA.

Ms. Ruffner pointed out that the focus and types of projects from the two programs is very different. AAHPP is focused less on heritage tourism products and more on the protection of historic properties.

Mr. Lee explained that a major difference between the programs is that MHAA will fund non-capital projects whereas AAHPP only funds capital projects. This is significant for minority organizations who struggle to locate programmatic funding from other funding sources.

Defining Heritage

Ms. Ruffner asked the group for next steps or new business.

Mr. Lee asked about how the working group defines heritage and, in particular, Maryland Heritage.

Ms. Ruffner noted that the MHAA definition of heritage includes not only history but also cultural and natural resources.

Mr. McCord discussed the founding of Maryland and the importance of African Americans, Native Americans, and women in early Maryland heritage. He re-iterated his dedication to the working group.

Mr. Nnoma-Addison talked about the importance of inclusiveness to heritage.

Mr. Shapiro mentioned the negative connotations of heritage and insisted that heritage needs to be more than feel-good history. He acknowledged that heritage is complicated, and should be critical and address difficult topics as well.

Mr. Clark discussed the importance of sharing culture and common heritage and history.

Next Steps

Mr. McCord asked staff to provide updates on the facilitator process before the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 1:55pm.