

**Minutes of the
Ninety-Ninth Meeting of the
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
April 13, 2023**

The ninety-ninth meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) was convened on April 13, 2023 via web conference call and live-streaming. The public had the opportunity to listen/watch via live-streaming.

Authority Members/Designees Present

Rebecca 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); Pete Leshar (MD Association of Counties representative); Leah Renzi (representing MD State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury); Melissa Archer (representing MD Department of Housing & Community Development Secretary Jake Day); Elizabeth Fitzsimmons (representing MD Department of Commerce Secretary Kevin Anderson); Marty Baker (representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld); Hilary Bell (representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Joshua Kurtz); Rowland Agbede (representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks); Kevin Atticks (MD Department of Agriculture Secretary)

Authority Members/Designees Absent

Lee Towers (representing MD Higher Education Commission Secretary); John A. Kinnaird (MD Municipal League representative); Marianne Harms (Speaker of the House representative); Jonathan Hughes (Speaker of the House representative)

Staff Present

Ariane Hofstedt (Maryland Historical Trust); Martha Waldron (Maryland Historical Trust); Andrew Arvizu (Maryland Historical Trust); Nell Ziehl (Maryland Historical Trust); Rieyn DeLony (Office of the Attorney General)

Heritage Area Directors/Staff Present

Lucille Walker (Southern Maryland Heritage Area and Co-Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition); Brigitte Carty (Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway and Co-Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition); Sarah Rogers (Montgomery County Heritage Area); Elizabeth Shatto (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area); Carol Benson (Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area); Meagan Baco (Anacostia Trails Heritage Area); Kim Folk (Mountain Gateway to the West Heritage Area); Aaron Shapiro (Patapsco Valley Heritage Area); Holly Gilpin (Heart of

Chesapeake Country); Gail Owings (Stories of the Chesapeake); Deidra Ritchie (Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area/Canal Place); Shauntee Daniels (Baltimore National Heritage Area); Lisa Challenger (Beach to Bay Heritage Area); Emily Huebner (Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area); Brandon R (Southern Maryland Heritage Area)

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Flora called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

MHAA CHAIRPERSON ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES

Secretary Flora greeted the Authority and shared her background and experience in historic preservation, cultural resources, and community development.

Secretary Flora called on Authority members to introduce themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 12, 2023 MEETING

Secretary Flora asked for discussion of the meeting Minutes from the January 12 meeting of the Authority. There were none. She also recommended members who had not been present at the meeting to abstain from the vote.

Pete Leshar made the following motion, Marty Baker seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the January 12, 2023 Minutes as presented.

The motion was approved unanimously with Secretary Flora, Ms. Bell, Ms. Archer, and Ms. Renzi abstaining.

MANAGEMENT REPORT (Ariane Hofstedt, MHAA Administrator; Martha Waldron, MHAA Assistant Administrator)

MHAA Financing Fund Report and FY24 Funding

Ms. Hofstedt reminded the Authority that at the last meeting we reported \$41,558.32 in the financing fund. Since then, one grant (\$8,500) from FY 2022 withdrew, bringing our current total to \$50,058.32.

Ms. Hofstedt also reminded the Authority of their previous motion to set aside \$100,000 of the FY 2024 allocation for emergency grant purposes. As such, the amount of the financing fund will increase when that money is put into effect. She also reported that the \$6 million appropriation requested for the FY 2024 fiscal year was approved during the legislative session.

FY 2023 Update: Grant Agreements Processed

Ms. Hofstedt reported that we are in the final stretch of processing grant agreements for FY 2023 with 73% of grant agreements in place and first payments starting to be distributed. The remaining percentage are in process with the goal to have them completed by early May.

Mr. Leshar asked about streamlining the process for distributing grant agreements moving forward, in lieu of the delay in FY 2023. Ms. Hofstedt admitted that we are a few months behind in processing these due to a key staff person leaving. The good news is that this position has been filled and should rectify the issue for FY 2024. Additionally, we are looking internally at the grant agreement administrative process and are working on streamlining it.

Secretary Flora reemphasized the difficulties with staffing across all state agencies and improve efficiency with IT, legal, etc.

FY 2024 Update: Applications Received and Grants Review Panel

Ms. Hofstedt shared that the state grants review panel is in full swing and moving towards the July Authority meeting where recommendations for FY 2024 project grant funding will be presented for final approval. The program is very pleased with the 168 project applications received with a total ask amount of approximately \$8.6 million. We are hopeful that the revised application and scoring rubric are more user-friendly and have eliminated some barriers for applicants.

Ms. Baker asked if the \$8.6 million total ask for FY 2024 include management grant requests. Staff replied that no, the \$8.6 million only includes the non-capital and capital project grants.

FY 2022 Annual Report

Ms. Waldron reported that the FY22 Annual Report is almost finalized and will be distributed to both the Authority and the Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition when it's ready.

Member Appointments

Ms. Hofstedt announced that five new members are joining the Authority. Welcome! There are still two vacant positions that we are looking to fill in an interim basis for the rest of the year. An orientation will be scheduled within the next few months for new members.

Secretary Flora mentioned the importance of an orientation in addition to conflict of interest/ethics training for Authority members to which Ms. Hofstedt replied that we are speaking with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to verify what is required and recommended.

Racial Equity Working Group (REWG) Update

Ms. Hofstedt reminded the Authority that Symphonic Strategies presented a draft report on their findings to the Authority, the Coalition, and the Racial Equity Working Group in November 2022. Comments were gathered from these stakeholders and shared with the consultant. Efforts were made to address issues with the report over the last several months but ultimately, Symphonic Strategies requested that the contract be terminated, citing internal management issues that had prevented them from producing the requested revised final report and fulfilling the terms of the contract.

MHAA staff do believe that there was useful information presented in the draft report. A memo was created and distributed amongst the Racial Equity Working Group that included an overview of the process and highlighted recommendations for a potential phase 2 of the program's work towards racial equity. Once members of the REWG have a chance to provide feedback, final recommendations from the working group will be put forward to the Authority at the July meeting.

Ms. Hofstedt also noted that the Authority will be recouping \$40,000 of our \$50,000 contract with Symphonic Strategies. These funds will be available to reapply towards this work.

Secretary Flora thanked Ms. Hofstedt for the update and shared that she will be directly involved in this work and will be attending the Racial Equity Working Group meeting on April 19 and plans to keep this process on track.

ACTION ITEMS

Resolution R-200 to Approve Completed Five-Year Action Plans

Ms. Hofstedt introduced the resolution. Secretary Flora opened the floor for questions or discussion.

Mr. Leshar commented that several years ago, the Authority moved away from statewide priorities to reinforce the local decision making behind heritage tourism. He feels that these are well thought-out plans and representative of what is happening at the local level. He commended each heritage area for completing this process and highlighting what makes their individual areas attractive and unique.

Ms. Hofstedt reminded everyone that each of the heritage areas are required to complete comprehensive management plans to achieve state certification. The five-year action plans are a tool to keep these plans up to date and relevant – it's an immediate way to keep their strategies and goals up to date in 5-year increments, as per the MHAA strategic plan.

Six heritage areas presented extenuated circumstances that required them to request a deferred start date, which is why two resolutions have been presented to the Authority. Program staff have done a review and developed recommendations for the heritage areas. The staff request that approval be considered with the staff recommendations in mind, which mostly consisted of formatting changes and clarification of dates.

Mr. Campbell pointed out the need for consistency between the resolution's language "as presented" and the memo that was circulated outlining conditions.

Ms. Walker expressed concern about the memo that was circulated and asked why it was not shared with the heritage area directors.

Secretary Flora apologized about the short timing in distributing the memo and emphasized the importance of communication moving forward.

Ms. Baker observed that in the past, the Technical Advisory Committee was involved in reviewing the management grants. There were many good reasons to move to the new Grants Review model, but Ms. Baker reminded the Authority that state agencies may have resources that could strengthen the capacity of the heritage area directors as they implement these plans. She encouraged folks to reach out about these resources that can help deliver on these objectives.

Secretary Flora thanked Ms. Baker, asked for a motion to approve the resolution as stated and asked that the program staff work directly with the heritage area directors on the comments presented in the memo.

Mr. Campbell made the following motion, Mr. Leshner seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the requests of the following heritage areas to approve their Five-Year Action Plans for FY24 – FY28 as presented:

- **Beach to Bay Heritage Area**
- **Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area**
- **Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area**
- **Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area**
- **Lower Susquehanna Heritage Area**
- **Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area**
- **Patapsco Valley Heritage Area**

The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions.

Resolution R-300 to Approve Deferred Start Dates and Interim Action Plans

Secretary Flora opened the floor for discussion.

Ms. Baker expressed some questions about the level of detail in the deferment letters related to the activities taking place within the deferment period.

Ms. Hughes made the following motion, Ms. Baker seconded.

RESOLVED, that the Authority approves the requests of the following heritage areas to defer the start date of their Action Plans until no later than July of 2024 and use the Interim Action Plans as presented until their final plans are complete:

- **Southern Maryland Heritage Area**
- **Baltimore National Heritage Area**
- **Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area**

- **Canal Place/Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area**
- **Anacostia Trails Heritage Area**
- **Heritage Montgomery**

The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions.

Resolution R-400 to Approve a Request by the Beach to Bay Heritage Area and Somerset County to Amend the Boundary of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area

Mr. Arvizu described the boundary amendment request put forward by the Beach to Bay Heritage Area to include Janes Island State Park within the existing boundary. This inclusion is time sensitive as they have applied for a FY 2024 MHAA capital project grant.

Ms. Challenger shared that over time, the heritage area has identified some glaring omissions within its original and existing boundaries. Jane’s Island is one of the most visited locations in Somerset County along with the Smith Island/Crisfield area. The existing boundary practically touches Janes Island State Park.

Ms. Bell asked if confirmation from DNR/staff at Jane’s Island had been notified.

Ms. Challenger replied yes that a letter of support had been provided.

Ms. Archer made the following motion, Mr. Leshar 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 Beach to Bay Heritage Area and Somerset County to amend the boundary of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area to include Janes Island State Park.

The motion was approved with Mr. Campbell abstaining.

Resolution R-500 to Approve a Request by the Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area and Anne Arundel County to Amend the Boundary of the Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area

Mr. Arvizu described the boundary amendment request put forward by the Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area to include Bunker Hill and Baldwin Hall, both of which are on the National Register. MHT holds a preservation easement on Baldwin Hall. They are right off the edge of the existing boundary. This is also a time-sensitive request as the Severn Crossroads Foundation is applying for a FY 2024 MHAA project grant.

Ms. Benson thanked Mr. Arvizu and shared that when the last boundary amendment was done during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, they didn’t have a chance to meet with all partner organizations within the heritage area.

An official motion was not recorded but Secretary Flora called for a vote.

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 Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area and Anne Arundel County to amend the boundary of the Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area to include Bunker Hill and Baldwin Hall.

The resolution was approved with no abstentions.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Additional FY 2024 Operating Funds for Heritage Areas

Ms. Hofstedt shared that thanks to the strong advocacy efforts of the Coalition, a one-time additional \$500,000 was appropriated for MHAA to “enhance the grants provided to the 13 heritage areas.” This is a broad and general application of the funds. At the state level, staff are working to try to identify the most efficient way to distribute these funds to each heritage area without additional cumbersome paperwork or process. More details will be provided by the start of the new fiscal year.

October 2023 MHAA Meeting In-Person

Ms. Hofstedt reported that after receiving several requests, we are eager to plan an in-person Authority meeting for the fall quarterly meeting in October. In the past, there was a rotating schedule for visiting each heritage area. We are looking at re-implementing this rotation and looking toward next year, we hope to hold two in-person meetings and two virtual meetings. The July meeting, for example, will likely remain virtual since we hope for the best attendance to approve the slate of grant awards.

Secretary Flora mentioned that she wants to make these in-person meetings an opportunity to showcase what is happening within the heritage area.

Mr. Leshar said that in-person visits have been enormously valuable in educating Authority members about heritage resources across the state.

Secretary Flora thanked Mr. Leshar and said we will try to confirm this and get it on everyone’s calendar as soon as possible.

MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Baker mentioned that MDOT has a series of grant opportunities that are currently open, including the Recreational Trails and Transportation Tourist programs both of which close in mid-May. Additionally, the Bikeways program will be opening in May with a June close date. MDOT is also updated their bicycle pedestrian masterplan – there is a virtual public meeting on April 13 and an in-person meeting in Howard County on April 15.

Ms. Archer announced that DHCD's State Revitalization grants will be launching for application on April 26.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Hofstedt outlined that in addition to the capital and non-capital project grants, MHAA provides managing, marketing, and block grants to the heritage area entities. The review process is slightly different than the project grant review which utilizes an external review panel made up of members of the public and state agency representatives. Management and marketing grants are reviewed by a smaller panel comprised of members of the Authority. We are asking for 3-5 individuals to serve on the management grant review committee and 3-5 individuals to serve on the marketing grant review committee. Block grant review is done by the program staff.

Ms. Fitzsimmons volunteered to sit on the marketing grant review committee.

MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS COALITION (MHAC) REPORT Lucille Walker, Co-Chair

Ms. Walker welcomed Secretary Flora and both new and returning members of the Authority and gave a brief overview of the Coalition's role and how they advocate on behalf of the Maryland Heritage Areas program.

Heritage Area Director Highlights

Ms. Walker, Ms. Rodgers, Ms. Folk, Ms. Shatto, Ms. Owings, Mr. Shapiro, and Ms. Daniels shared updates from each of their respective heritage areas.

Secretary Flora thanked each of the directors who presented and invited the remaining heritage area directors who did not present to share any events or hot topics.

Mx. Baco, Ms. Benson, Ms. Ritchie, and Ms. Carty also shared updates from their respective heritage areas.

ADJOURNMENT

Before adjourning, Secretary Flora gave a brief update on Maryland250. She hopes to have a more detailed update at the July meeting, but she is assessing, re-thinking, and realigning the commission with the Governor's Office to establish a focused path forward.

Ms. Fitzsimmons motioned to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Leshar seconded.

Secretary Flora adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.