



## Maryland DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

### Memo

**To:** Shaina A. Hernandez, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor's Office

**From:** Rebecca L. Flora, Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA)

**CC:** Members of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority; Brad Fallon, Deputy Legislative Officer, Governor's Office; Ariane Hofstedt, Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program

**Date:** February 19, 2025

**Re:** Notice of MHAA Special Meeting on February 13, 2025 and Approved Motion

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A special meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority was held on February 13, 2025, to discuss 2025 legislation that could potentially impact the work of MHAA, specifically SB0980 and HB1327 concerning Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants. The meeting, which was scheduled at the request of members, resulted in a motion to notify Governor Moore of MHAA's general desire for increased funding to support the work of the Authority. This memo serves as that notification and includes a brief summary of the proceedings, the motion, and some historical context.

As Chair of the Authority, I began the meeting by informing members that MHAA, as an "independent unit of government in the Executive Branch of government that operates in the Department of Planning," is subject to the requirement that it coordinate with the Governor's Office on legislative matters. I also noted that the same requirement to consult with the Governor on legislative matters applies to the Maryland Department of Planning, as well as all other cabinet agencies, including those that have representation on MHAA. MHAA did not take an official position (support or opposed) on SB0980 and HB1327, but instead stated a desire to share with Governor Moore its view that increased funding would have a positive impact on the work of the Authority.

To this end, the members of MHAA passed the following motion:

*"The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) should notify the Governor's Office in writing that MHAA members believe an increase in funding to the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, to include administering grants to organizations and agencies located within certified local heritage areas, would be beneficial to the overall work of the Authority and*

*encourages the Moore-Miller Administration to support an increase of Program Open Space funding to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority for this purpose.”*

The following members voted in favor of the motion:

- Elizabeth Hughes, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Natalie Chabot, Maryland Greenways Commission representative
- Melissa Archer, representing MD Department of Housing & Community Development Secretary Jake Day and Vice Chair to MHAA
- Mary Anne Harms, Speaker of the House representative
- Robert D. Campbell, Governor’s Appointee for Historic Preservation
- Nicholas Redding, President of the Senate representative
- Dennis Doster, Governor’s Appointee for Heritage Tourism
- Pete Leshner, Maryland Association of Counties representative
- Mayor Nathan Brown, Maryland Municipal League representative

The following members abstained:

- Secretary Rebecca M. Flora, MD Department of Planning and serving as the Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
- Hilary Bell, representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz

No members opposed the motion.

The following MHAA members were absent:

- Geoffrey Newman, representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Secretary Sanjay Rai
- Sandy Turner, Maryland Tourism Development Board representative
- Julie Schablitsky, representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld
- Jonathan Hughes, Speaker of the House representative
- Peter Ramsey, representing MD State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury (non-voting)
- Rowland Agbede, representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks (non-voting)

The Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition, composed of heritage area directors from all 13 certified heritage areas, is the group that has historically advocated for increased funding to

MHAA. Their advocacy efforts successfully doubled the funding to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority in FY19 when it was raised from \$3 million to \$6 million. MHAA did not take a position on the FY19 bills, but members of MHAA testified as individuals of the public not representing MHAA. The Coalition is once again advocating for the funds to MHAA to be doubled as outlined, among other provisions, in SB0980 and HB1327. Similar to last time, MHAA members have been informed that they are able to testify for these bills during the 2025 legislative session as individuals, not representing MHAA, if they so choose.