

Michigan Freedom Trail Commission

Meeting Minutes

Location: Michigan History Center, Lansing

Date: November 17, 2023

Roll call

Present for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission:

- Melinda Babarskis, Chair
- Rochelle Danquah
- Roy Finkenbine
- Kimberly Holley
- Adelaide Lancaster
- Robin Peebles
- Jason Young

Virtual for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission:

- Patrina Chatman
- Priscilla Robinson

Present for the Michigan History Center staff:

- Sandra Clark
- Sheri Giffin

Guests:

- Scott Koenig, Michigan Department of Education
- Jen Saylor, Michigan Department of Education

Call to Order

Babarskis called the meeting to order at 11:14 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

Holley moved to approve agenda; Finkenbine seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Approval of Minutes

Finkenbine moved approval of the May 19, 2023, meeting minutes as amended; Danquah seconded the motion, and the minutes were adopted unanimously.

Public Comment:

Scott Koenig from the Michigan Department of Education summarized the overall work of the department and its use of online learning opportunities for teachers to earn SCECHs credits for continuing professional development and teacher certification. The education team is interested in partnering with the Freedom Trail Commission to support and advance this work.

Heritage Gathering & Webinars:

Giffin reported on the favorable survey results from the 2023 Heritage Gathering. The commission reviewed suggested topics for 2024 and discussed creating a Heritage Gathering subcommittee. Koenig offered to partner with the commission on marketing the Heritage Gathering to teachers.

Reviewing Standing Committee Work and Goals:

For the benefit of the new commissioners, the chair of each subcommittee gave a brief explanation of the goals of the subcommittee along with updates.

Sites Identification: Danquah noted the four nominations that were approved by the National Network to Freedom: Wayne County Community College District Underground Railroad program, Michigan Central Railroad Depot, Henry and Elizabeth Hamer Burial Site and Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church. Potential nominations include: Black Scroll Network Tours, White Lake historical cemetery, Abram Power, two nominations from Detroit, Crosswhite family, and Pine Lake Mission (a.k.a. Greensky Church).

Cultural & Heritage Tourism: Peebles stated that Travel Michigan articles should be 300-500 words in length with high resolution images, including image rights, and a focus on traveling to locations around Michigan.

Education: Young suggested gathering stories from the Upper Peninsula, other groups such as the Anishinaabe, and the cross-boarder connection. The goal is to gather and disseminate boarders stories from around the state/region.

New Business:

The commission reviewed 2024 meeting dates.

Finkenbine nominated Barbarskis as chair and Robinson as vice chair; Lancaster seconded the motion. The nominations were approved unanimously.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.