

# Michigan Freedom Trail Commission

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Michigan History Center, Lansing

Date: August 2, 2024

### **Roll call**

Present for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission:

- Mindy Babarskis
- Amanda Campbell Crawford
- Roy Finkenbine
- Kimberly Holley
- Randall Jelks
- Nicole Ly

Virtual for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission:

- Rochelle Danquah
- Adelaide Lancaster
- Jamon Jordan
- Priscilla Robinson

Present for the Michigan History Center staff:

- Sandra Clark
- Sheri Giffin

Guests:

- Larry McClellan,
- Rozlyn Kelly, public

Call to Order

Babarskis called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.

## Approval of Agenda

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

## Approval of Minutes

Holley moved approval of the May 10, 2024, meeting minutes; Robinson seconded the motion, and the minutes were adopted unanimously.

## Introduction of New Commissioners:

Randal Jelks is a professor at Indiana University and lives in Grand Rapids. He is teaching African and African American diaspora studies.

Nicole Ly represented Travel Michigan, which is focused on marketing and web content for the program.

## Public Comment:

Larry McClellan shared about the progress on the Chicago to Detroit corridor project. The commission indicated a willingness to share any information.

## Standing Committees:

Cultural & Heritage Tourism: Holley requested information on tours within the state. After listing known area tours, the commissioners noted that area tours focus on city or county information, but there is opportunity for a state-wide tour.

Heritage Gathering & Webinars: Finkenbine reviewed the theme for this year's conference of Working Towards Freedom: Occupations and the Underground Railroad.

Sites Identification: Danquah reported about potential nominations for the next deadline in January 2025. A team is putting together a nomination for Oakhill Cemetery highlighting several freedom seekers. Danquah and Lancaster are working on a nomination focused on Laura Haviland. Livonia also has a potential nomination with freedom seekers and abolitionists.

Education: Lancaster reported that the education committee submitted a grant to ASALH (Association for the Study of African American Life and History). The application is for a teacher workshop focused on place-based learning MHC booklet on the life of John Felix White. Grants will be announced in October.

## New Business:

Finkenbine suggested reviewing the 2014 Truth-Haviland Humanitarian Award criteria. The award was created to honor the legacy work of individuals advancing the scholarship and teaching of the Underground Railroad. In alternate years, honor an individual whose lives and careers have displayed the values of the Underground Railroad.

Babariskis nominated Danquah as Chair and Lancaster as Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

### Staff Updates:

Clark reported the achievement of the two University of Michigan interns in submitting their nominations by the July submission deadline.

### Research Updates:

Finkenbine has been contacted by the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi about his work on the Anishinaabe aiding freedom seekers. They are looking for archival information to supplement the oral stories and histories in their collection.

Finkenbine also encouraged everyone to attend the Midwest History Conference. The conference is held in Grand Rapids and open to professional and avocational historians.

### Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.