

Michigan Freedom Trail Commission

Meeting Minutes

Location: Michigan History Center, Lansing

Date: May 10, 2024

Roll call

Present for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission:

- Rochelle Danquah
- Roy Finkenbine
- Kimberly Holley
- Jamon Jordan
- Adelaide Lancaster

Virtual for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission:

- Priscilla Robinson, Acting Chair

Present for the Michigan History Center staff:

- Sandra Clark
- Sheri Giffin

Guests:

- Ron Gay, Pontiac
- Cathy LaPointe, Cass County
- Sara DeSmet, University of Michigan intern
- Michael Delphia, University of Michigan intern

Call to Order

Robinson called the meeting to order at 11:16 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

Lancaster moved to approve agenda; Jordan seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Approval of Minutes

Jordan moved approval of the February 23, 2024, meeting minutes; Danquah seconded the motion, and the minutes were adopted unanimously.

Public Comment:

Ron Gay introduced himself as a local historian from Pontiac, Michigan, who is working on a Network to Freedom nomination. Gay has also submitted his name for consideration to be a Freedom Trail commissioner.

Introduction of U of M Interns:

Delphia introduced himself as a junior at U of M focusing on history and Asian studies. DeSmet noted that she just finished her sophomore year at Michigan, majoring in history and the history of art with a minor in museum studies.

Standing Committees:

Heritage Gathering & Webinars: Finkenbine gave an update on the one-day Heritage Gathering conference on September 21. The theme for this year is Working Towards Freedom: Occupations and the Underground Railroad. Speakers will delve into how people's occupations enhanced their Underground Railroad work.

Education: Lancaster offered to convene a meeting to work toward updating the goals for the committee.

Sites Identification: Danquah reported about potential nominations highlighting E.P. Benham, White Lake Cemetery with C.C. Foote, Ira Power and Marcus Swift. Farmington Cemetery's nomination will be updated to include Nathan Power's wife.

Staff Updates:

Clark reported on the status of the Grant house and the stabilization project. MHC is having conversations with the Black Bottom Archive about using the building for their offices and joint work on static exhibits in the house.

Research Updates:

Finkenbine was 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 each year and open to professional and avocational historians.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:51 p.m.