

# Michigan Freedom Trail Commission

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Michigan History Center, Lansing

Date: May 2, 2025

### **Roll call**

Present for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission:

- Melinda Babarskis
- George Bayard
- Carolyn Carter
- Amanda Campbell Crawford
- Rochelle Danquah
- Jennifer Evans
- Kimberly Holley
- Adelaide Lancaster
- Nicole Ly

Present for the Michigan History Center staff:

- Sandra Clark
- Sheri Giffin

Guests:

- Lilly Gerrits
- Naida McCoy

### Call to Order

Danquah called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

### Introduction of New Commissioners and Interns

University of Michigan student interns, Lilly Gerrits and Naida McCoy, introduced themselves and noted their appreciation for the opportunity to work with the commission on nominations to the National Network to Freedom.

The newest Michigan Freedom Trail Commissioners introduced themselves.

- George Bayard III is the Executive Director of the Grand Rapids African American Museum.

- Dr. Carolyn Carter has written several Network to Freedom nominations and has worked in history and genealogy for many years.
- Jennifer Evans is the Senior Director of Exhibitions at the Charles Wright Museum.

## Approval of Agenda

Carter moved to approve agenda; Babarskis seconded the motion, and it was approved.

## Approval of Minutes

Lancaster moved approval of the February 28, 2025, meeting minutes as amended; Campbell Crawford seconded the motion, and the minutes were adopted unanimously.

## Public Comment:

McCoy talked about some of her volunteer experiences working with Virginia's history of enslavement.

## Standing Committees:

Cultural & Heritage Tourism: Holley reported on the first committee meeting. The group brainstormed themes and protentional projects focused on preserving, promoting and sharing history in fresh and exciting ways. A list of ideas and projects were collected to be reviewed at future standing meetings.

Heritage Gathering & Webinars: Campbell Crawford reported on the 2025 Heritage Gathering. The conference is scheduled for September 6 at the Detroit Public Library. The theme is "Stories from Old Detroit". The committee requested that commissioners submit organization, historical societies, institution contacts and other marketing avenues in order to promote the Heritage Gathering and increase attendance.

Education: Lancaster highlighted partnership with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) teacher webinar series. MDE would welcome any commissioners to speak at the teacher enrichment sessions throughout the year.

Lancaster updated the commission about the John White workshop. The Association for the Study of African American Life and History grant was planned for 25 teachers; however, with changes in the budget, the workshop will be able to host 41 teachers.

Sites Identification: Danquah gave an overview of the committee and its work. The commission reviewed a list of possible nomination topics.

Clark asked the commissioners to review the list of potential nominations for options for the University of Michigan summer interns.

## New Business:

Danquah requested volunteers to serve on a nomination committee. Carter, Campbell Crawford and Babarskis volunteered.

Carter reported on the Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) legislatively designed America250 grant. WCCCD plans to build an outdoor interpretive space that will be called Freedom Point.

Danquah updated the commission on the National Network to Freedom program.

Ly shared opportunities available with the Travel Michigan website and its travel guide.

Carter announced that the National Civil Rights conference will be held in Detroit in 2026. Carter requested the commission consider presenting at the event.

## Staff Updates:

Clark noted the successful MHC Facebook post featuring the Hamer family.

## Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:02 p.m.