

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Date: 4/23/24

Time: 10a - 12p

Commissioners in Attendance:

Yasmin Behram, Regina Boyce, Monica Brooks, Camille Burke, Dr. Renee Carr, Subha Chandar, Crystal Faison, Kellie Gaither, Tracy Garrett, Paulette Hammond, Voncia Molock, Rebecca Rehr, Asha Smith, Sacoby Wilson

Interested Parties:

Sarah Abel, Becky Benner, Nadya Chehab, André Chung, Patrick DeArmeay, Kennedy Fichtel, Kamita Gray, Joseph Griffiths, Lorenzo Hughes, Rona Kobell, Erin Lynam, Jennifer MacQuillan, Dorothy Morrison, Sarah Peters, Jocelyn Potts, Nicola Smith-Kea, Matthew Standeven, Katara West, Sean Yoes

1. Video Presentation

- “Eroding History” and discussion with film’s director André Chung and co-writers Rona Kobell and Sean Yoes

Questions and Comments

- Delegate Boyce - Who is the legislator in Deal Island? Noted the legislator can apply, annually, for a legislative bond initiative to assist with funding. She also asked if there is or once was a “white community” in that area.
- André responded that he hopes to have two gentlemen (black and white) who were interviewed in the movie to participate during the screening in Somerset County.
- Delegate Boyce inquired about the elevation of the church above flooding level. André

said eventually yes but the first step is to get the church back into a presentable condition.

- Rona responded to Delegate's Boyce first question stating the legislators are Delegate Otto and Senator Carozza. Rona reached out to both legislators but did/has not receive a response.
- Dr. Nikki asked 1) if the film is available for the public, 2) why was the film named Eroding History and 3) if the film crew is planning on continuing the project across similar communities. André commented that he plans to make the movie public soon but no current plans to continue the project. André said the film's title reflected the erosion of the sea level and our communities.
- Dr. Carr asked if there will be an equitable distribution of funds in Deal Island. Sean replied that the Eastern Shore of Maryland is similar to the deep south. Rona stated that the Eastern Shore is an example of modern racism and the gatekeeping that is occurring in positions of power. The Somerset County Historical Trust did not fund the Deal Island project.
- Commissioner Brooks noted that she lives on the Eastern Shore and agreed with the comment about the deep south. She will write to Delegate Otto about land ownership and various ways to keep the land from flooding. Rona commented that there are predatory practices surrounding the sale of land and homes. The waterfront homes on Deal Island predominantly are owned by white families. There are no large black communities that own waterfront homes.
- Joseph Griffiths commented that historically Black people were forced to live in these areas which are now threatened by rising sea levels. It was also mentioned that redlining should be taken into account when the Maryland Historical Trust is funding remediation projects.
- The Maryland Historical Trust and the African American Preservation Heritage Grant funded \$140K in the restoration of the John Wesley United Methodist Church.
- Chair Burke asked about any statistics on remaining black families in Deal Island. André commented that there are only a handful of black families remaining.
- Sarah Abel sees a connection with preservation work done by Scenic Byways and the Heritage Area Authority. Rona was not able to connect with the Heritage Area Authority.
- Asha Smith asks if the EJ Screening Tool captures communities like Deal Island and other areas affected by climate change.

The meeting adjourned.

Notes (in part) from the chat:

00:18:19.456,00:18:22.456

Rebecca Rehr: Thank you for mentioning matching funds. That is a consistent issue.

00:26:37.386,00:26:40.386

André Chung: My email is andre@achungphoto.com

00:27:49.079,00:27:52.079

Regina T. Boyce: Good point Joseph

00:30:17.985,00:30:20.985

Regina T. Boyce: We are now with the Maryland Great Outdoors Act

00:30:24.984,00:30:27.984

Asha Smith: Are there opportunities under the new Just Communities legislation? This might a good discussion with Cat Goughnour.

00:31:02.817,00:31:05.817

Joseph Griffiths -MDP-: Thank you for the film and for the conversation. This is very enlightening and I will discuss it with my MHT colleagues

00:32:30.421,00:32:33.421

Nicola Smith-Kea, PhD (Dr. Nikki): Very enlightening indeed. Thank you so very much for this work and sharing with us. Looking forward to sharing this film with so many others.

00:35:47.115,00:35:50.115

Sarah Abel -MDP-: Here is Rev. William Wallace's contact information:
<https://www.pen-del.org/clergydetail/575224>

00:38:07.951,00:38:10.951

Regina T. Boyce: I will be contacting both Senator Carozza and Delegate Otto regarding their disengagement.

00:38:58.357,00:39:01.357

Regina T. Boyce: Deal island is in Somerset

00:39:30.524,00:39:33.524

Monica Brooks: Thank you. I will ve sending a letter as well

00:39:40.699,00:39:43.699

Regina T. Boyce: Good!!! Copy me

00:40:29.849,00:40:32.849

Monica Brooks: Will do

00:41:44.425,00:41:47.425

Regina T. Boyce: Good question

00:41:58.464,00:42:01.464

Sarah Abel -MDP-: The MHT African American Heritage Preservation Program grant fund may be of interest and will be opening in April:

<https://mht.maryland.gov/Pages/funding/grants-AAHPP.aspx>

00:42:37.920,00:42:40.920

Rona Kobell: Sarah, Chanelle tried to get a grant and could not. It is very competitive now.

00:44:33.747,00:44:36.747

Regina T. Boyce: This has been fantastic!

00:44:46.760,00:44:49.760

Rona Kobell: Thank you! Glad we could do it!

00:44:59.044,00:45:02.044

B. Thomas Burton (BTB Coalition): Thank you very much Andre for bringing this to light... I am appalled by what I have seen today... in this day being I have history in Maryland since the 1790's my Great Grandmother, My Grandmother and my Mother whom is 99... I want to thank you for the TITLE it is very appropriated... We don't know our history here in MD... MARYLAND IS A SOUTHERN STATE in every since of the word... We as black could own land and yes we where pushed to less desirable land as with Brandywine, MD was slated for a DUMPING

00:45:32.499,00:45:35.499

B. Thomas Burton (BTB Coalition): we could not vote or hold any office sent to less desirable lands. We were kept as a black population as subordinate... even in this day with black legislatures.

00:45:38.365,00:45:41.365

André Chung: Thank you Mr. Burton!