

HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY

A MUSEUM OF HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY AT
MARYLAND'S FIRST CAPITAL

HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY COMMISSION COMMISSION MEETING

Saturday, June 15, 2024

Campus Center 205

St. Mary's College of Maryland

St. Mary's City, MD 20686

10:00am – 3:00pm

Members Present: Rear Admiral Tim Heely, USN (retired), Chair; Bonnie Green, Vice Chair; Julie King, William Drew, Judy Fillius, Lucille Walker, Adrienne Mathis, Linda Kohler

Members Virtual: Kyle Harmon, Owen Lewis, BJ Hall

Staff: John L. Seidel, Executive Director; Peter Carroccio, COO; Travis Parno, Director of Education; Joe Kangas, Director of Facilities; Porzia Purves, Director of Business Enterprises

Guests: Elena Langrill, Assistant Attorney General; Cindy Kramer, incoming Board Member; Bob Simmons

A quorum was present

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

10:00 Welcome and call to order

I. Approval of Minutes Chair

Rear Admiral Tim Heely, USN (retired)

Ms. Walker had two items she asked to be addressed in the minutes from the previous meeting. With regard to the phrasing concerning the mold, she requested that the work "utmost" be deleted on page 4, rephrasing to "We believe this is a health and welfare issue of importance." Ms. Walker also asked that the Commission see a list of priorities for the museum.

Ms. Langrill explained we can make the suggested changes and then circulate the minutes via email for approval. Ms. Purves will amend the minutes and resend.

Chairman Heely asked for a motion to accept the minutes with suggested amendments, Ms. Walker made the motion, seconded by Mr. Drew; the motion passed unanimously.

P.O. BOX 39, ST. MARY'S CITY, MARYLAND 20686

Wes Moore, Governor John L. Seidel, Ph.D., Executive Director Rear Admiral Tim Heely, USN (retired), Chairman

II. Chair's Report

Rear Admiral Tim Heely, USN (retired) Chair

- a. MOU – Chairman Heely reported the Foundation has scheduled a special meeting on June 29, 2024, to discuss the MOU between the two boards.
- b. BeerFest is coming up June 22, 2024 – it's a great event and the Foundation is looking for additional volunteers if you are available.

III. Committee Updates

a. Administration

Ms. Fleming

Mr. Hall reported on behalf of Ms. Fleming. The committee met in May and reviewed the budget, the relationship with DGS, a property management update, and discussed the mold situation. There was a discussion regarding the progress with the Foundation-HSMCC MOU. The committee wishes to add another member of the commission to the Committee and will be working on the bylaws.

b. Education

Ms. Mathis

Ms. Mathis reported the committee is committed to supporting the Education Department.

c. Grounds

Mr. Drew

Chairman Heely reported that Mr. Drew is the new chair of the Grounds Committee. Mr. Drew reported there's a lot going on, with construction on the new VC moving forward and the Farthing's parking lot under construction. The parking lot contractor assured the group that drainage has been calculated. The surface will be interlocking block, and the lot will be lighted; the design should be similar to the current lot.

Mr. Drew asked Dr. Seidel to speak about the mold remediation. Dr. Seidel explained that the situation is mostly caused by deferred maintenance that has developed over time, with a staff that is over-worked and short-handed. What we are dealing with is a large maintenance problem. We bought in an inspector to look at 6 properties, the first five buildings were housing our staff, the sixth was the Inn, and discovered that all 6 buildings had mold to some degree. Due the unavailability of internal funds, the team went to the Secretary of DGS and pleaded for emergency funds to address the Inn and the PR building. The Secretary of DGS has awarded us \$300K on an emergency basis to move forward with the remediation, and a project manager has been assigned. Of course, we have a few

steps moving forward currently. Mr. Drew asked about a timeline. Mr. Kangas responded, “We have two weeks for the scope of work, then it will go out to bid for 30 days, and then its likely 2-3 months before work can start.” Ms. Green stated it’s a priority situation. Chair Heely asked what happens when Annapolis doesn’t support the problem. Dr. Seidel said he has been told that there is a new state-wide mold remediation program going live soon, and we want to be first in line to get the funding. We are hoping the money for these problems will come from other sources, as this would seriously strain our budget. Ms. Mathis asked what the alternatives are for the staff located in the affected buildings? Dr. Seidel stated no one has brought any health issues to the director, but we are nevertheless looking for alternative spaces and interim measures. If we need to bring in a trailer, we will, and some individuals can work remotely. We take this seriously.

Ms. Fillius asked about the hiring of staff as mentioned in the Quarterly report. Dr. Seidel responded that we are looking very hard at how we take on tasks internally or go external, and we are working with DBM to explore a finance model that they have adopted for other small agencies. The hope is that this could allow us to take on some of our own finance tasks currently handled by the College.

Ms. Green added it’s about the priorities and what we are doing to support the museum. Ms. Green added that we have the Fort to 400 Commission, and we have to say we are doing this because it’s attached to our mission. Ms. Walker added she supports Ms. Green’s comments.

Dr. King noted that at the meeting in December, we voted to involve the Piscataway, and it involved budgeting. Dr. Seidel responded that Kyle Harmon has been a tremendous help. We do not want the relationship to be transactional, but to work on a strong, long-term relationship with the Piscataway. Dr. Seidel and Mr. Harmon met with Keith Colston, of the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs and had a positive conversation. There was a meeting with the Indigenous Community a year or so ago to discuss the MHIC, the Community was asked for review, but there has so far been no response. But Dr. Seidel noted that there has been mistrust over many years. This will take time to resolve, and we “must move at the speed of trust.” Dr. King asked about the schedule for the exhibit. Pete Carroccio responded that effective August 2024, the construction exhibit will begin to cost us money. Ms. Green added, perhaps we should invite them to look at the building. Ms. Walker stated at this point we should give them the content expert, honorarium, funding for their expertise. Dr. Seidel added that we need all parties in the room to help convey the message. Dr. King stated we need to move forward in a positive way, regardless of bleeding money. Dr. Seidel agreed, noting again that the board voted to put the exhibit on hold until the situation has been resolved. Mr. Harmon added that not all parties are at the same level of urgency – we should have the discussion that August 1st is looming. Our ability to respond hinges on a number of cultural things, so let’s meet them culturally, bring in Angela Barnes and other members; this isn’t just the relationship of the VC and

the 400th, it's a relationship that need to be re-engaged to build a future relationship.

Ms. Walker agreed with Mr. Harmon and suggested putting together a meeting. Mr. Carroccio indicated that we will not let Piscataway know there is a deadline. Dr. Seidel thanked both Lucille and Kyle for working with the group. As Ms. Fillius reminded the group, our timeline is not necessarily their timeline. Dr. Seidel said it's important that we get this right. The support that you all give us is important. Mr. Carroccio added the exhibit fabrication will be pushed back.

Ms. Walker stated she heard we acquired a house (Branham house). Ms. Green indicated its six months. Mr. Kangas has been in contact with Mr. Branham. Dr. Seidel and Mr. Kangas toured the building after Mrs. Branham's passing. The home needs work, but it is a nice property. Ms. Green stated it's a much more suitable home for the executive director. Ms. Walker stated that perhaps the grounds and planning committee could assist with this. She added that she would like the priority list from the ED. Maybe our priorities are not the same. Mr. Drew responded that there are many things that we can cross over. Dr. Seidel stated he can certainly submit a list of priorities, with the caveat that he believes that any priority list should be based on consensus. We have gone through multiple master plans over time, including the stadium authority report and the master plan of 2021, so senior staff have been trying to collate all the planning over the past 30 years. We need to isolate the parts of the master plan that take priority, getting us to 2034, and then beyond.

Ms. Green stated there was never a discussion with the commission and the stadium authority. Dr. Seidel noted that no-one at the Commission, from professional staff to the Commissioners, was meaningfully consulted in that study, but he noted the stadium authority study is not dead; additional funding apparently has been allocated for Phase 2. The hotel is part of the master plan. Mr. Drew added there are a number of alternatives and that should be analyzed. Dr. Seidel agreed, stating that we are investigating all of this. The absence of lodging here is a huge problem. Dr. King - just remember you are surrounded by people who will have an opinion. Dr. Seidel - there is no concrete plan to build a hotel at the moment, but we need to see if it's feasible and desirable and go from there. Any future planning must involve the community.

Ms. Walker added she would like to assist when and if the Governor comes for a visit; she would like to offer assistance.

Ms. Walker reported that Brian Norris is the chair of the Fort to 400. There is no money right now, but there should be and the Commission is being run through the Office of Tourism. There is a model in Virginia that we should be looking at.

Ms. Kohler asked if there is a budget for Capital projects. Dr. Seidel noted HSMC has an ambitious capital program and that we plan five years and more in advance.

Mr. Lewis asked about the old Dove what was happening with it. Dr. Seidel stated that the topic will be discussed when they meet with Senator Bailey. The overwhelming sentiment is to be cautious, as likely there will be a tremendous cost. Mr. Carroccio added that there is cost now, removal of lead paint, it's been wrapped, and we pay a storage fee monthly.

- d. Planning Ms. Walker
The committee is going to work with grounds. The committee will receive the list of priorities.

IV. Foundation Report

Ms. Bennett Wilson, President

Chairman Heely indicated the Foundation is having an emergency meeting to discuss the MOU and how it works together with the Commission. The Chair asked if the Madrigals was a Foundation event. Ms. Green responded no, but felt it should be. The event was cancelled last year and there was some resentment about the cancellation. Ms. Green added does it need to be reinvented.

V. Executive Director's Report

Dr. John L. Seidel

Dr. Seidel stated the reporting format is a work in progress and asked the board to let him know what they find most useful in terms of information and format. We also want to be sure there are more metrics included in the future.

The budget is on track for 2024, and we are pleased to have hired a new shop manager and facility rental coordinator. We have filled the Director of Advancement and Communications position, having combined the two positions. We had 39 applicant from a national pool, narrowed that group to 5 for remote interviews, and invited three to visit. We hired Mike Bellis, and an announcement will go out in the near future. He will start on 24 July. It was a unanimous decision on the part of the search committee.

Dr. Seidel reported that part of the legislative audit asked that we do a work-place climate survey. This was deferred, as it initially was felt that this should be done externally, but there was no funding for the project. Revisiting this decision, Dr. Seidel decided that such a survey could be done internally, while preserving anonymity, and the survey was just completed. The survey included 10 questions, with ratings on a scale of 1-10, with room for substantive comments and response. We had 66 responses, which was a very impressive response rate, with some very lengthy written responses. Dr. Seidel noted that we pledged anonymity to respondents, so the results will be generalized. These will help form the basis for positive actions moving forward. There was a discussion about the survey, and Ms. Walker indicated that she had heard that staff feel intimidated by the board and asked if board members are allowed to visit the site. Dr. Seidel stated that yes, Commissioners are encouraged

to visit the site and engage with staff. There should be clear communication between the commission and staff, but commissioners should not be giving directives to staff.

Ms. Kohler reported that she has done this for other organizations as a consultant and it's very important to take it back to the staff with some of the changes.

Dr. King, try to diversify your leadership. Dr. Seidel stated we are aware of this situation and take diversity seriously.

Dr. Seidel reported the budget is in the Commissioners' packet. We submitted our budget in September, and the budget in the packet was adopted by the Governor's office. Between now and September we are working on the FY26 budget. We would like to meet in early September, prior to it being sent to the Governor. Ms. Walker asked if we have been affected by the supplemental budget. Dr. Seidel added that yes we have put in over the target and supplement requests yearly, but this year they were both denied. There was discussion regarding contractual employees and converting them to full-time pinned positions, however the Governor did not add funds for conversion.

Ms. Kohler stated the commission needs to diversify income, and isn't it better to discuss the best way to diversify income? We need to talk about this moving forward. Dr. Seidel agreed and we need to look at all of this. We have suffered a number of declines and it all needs to be looked at more regularly. He feels that we need to be doing a lot more on the private philanthropy side and raising endowment over the long term. Ms. Walker asked what the salary for the advancement position, Dr. Seidel reported the salary is \$135,000.

Ms. Green noted that dormant houses cost money, the question is do we renovate or demolish? Dr. Seidel agreed, noting that not all empty buildings are dormant, as some are in a renovation cycle. But we clearly need a hardheaded assessment of all the buildings. This review should ask what it will take to get our housing stock to market rates and what is the ROI. Dr. King asked about the house curator program that HSMC has undertaken. These are essentially out of the picture for now, due to the long-term nature of the agreements.

Ms. Langrill stated make sure you speak to the attorney when dealing with these properties. Mr. Drew asked about the situation regarding demolition. Dr. Seidel - this is possible, but we have to go through a variety of steps, ranging from assessment of the structure and the ROI for rehab, as well as an assessment of historic significance.

Chairman Heely asked all members of the board to please put Saturday, September 7, 2024 on their calendar for the next board meeting.

VI. Chapel Tour Report

Dr. John L. Seidel

Dr. Seidel explained that he has reviewed the history of the Chapel exhibits and the interpretive planning over time. Among other concerns was a sense that the chapel planning elements came as a surprise to some Commissioners and that there was a feeling that perhaps some of this was new. Dr. Seidel shared some of what he found with those Commissioners who were able to join the site tour on May 16. The intent of

that site visit was to better understand the larger context of the Chapel, prior to reporting at this meeting.

In general, Dr. Seidel determined that most of the Chapel planning elements have been in place for many years, with a focus on freedom of religion. “Liberty of Conscience” was the historical term consistently used by Lord Baltimore and others, including Cromwell (the term “freedom” is more recent). This has been a central focus of the Chapel interpretation and vision for over years. The HSMCC emphasis on religious freedom emerged at least as early as 1990, articulated in a Statement of Significance for an NEH grant – the first sentence notes that “The right to freedom of thought is one of the cornerstones of American democracy, and the separation of church and state is a jealously guarded principle that, even in today’s secular society, excites national headlines...The idea of tolerating different religions, championed by Cecil Calvert in Maryland, was a crucial step in the struggle for freedom of thought in America.”

Following this, a set of 1991 interpretive and site planning recommendations highlighted the “brave experiment in religious toleration.” In 1998, 26 years ago, the Chapel Campaign chaired by Cokie Roberts produced a case statement that featured on its cover a picture of the Chapel interior, including the alter and picture of Mary, and its opening lead was “Celebrating the Birthplace of Religious Freedom in America.” A 2003 Saving America’s

Treasures grant proposal highlighted the Chapel as “a visible symbol of the beginnings of religious freedom and the separation of Church and State that are central values of the United States today.” A Chapel brochure used from 2001-2009 again illustrated the interior as currently envisioned.

On the strength of these interpretive ideas, both thematic and the conception of the interior, HSMCC has raised a significant amount of money. For example, the donor list from 2014:

- Lists 1,060 people or organizations
- Donations from individuals range from \$10 up to \$140,000
- for foundations or agencies from \$500 up to \$500,000.
- Donors range from local citizens to nationally prominent individuals such as Judge Penfield Jackson, Ben Bradlee, Tom Brokaw, and Ted Koppel
- Walter Cronkite gave an in-kind donation, narrating a 10-minute chapel campaign video

Dr. Seidel feels that the current interpretation therefore has been around for at 34 years, and he expressed his belief that HSMCC has stewardship obligations based on all these promises, dating back to 1998.

Ms. Walker asked what exactly are you saying? Ms. Green added she was the Foundation President and doesn’t recall the Chapel campaign. Dr. Seidel reported that

these documents predate most of us but have been consistent over time. Part of the objective of the tour with the commissioners was to convey that and to give the larger context of the interpretation.

Mr. Drew observed that the length of time for the project speaks to the research that has been done, it's not going to represent what we think today, it represents what the colonists did. Mr. Drew is against anything that will change direction, he understands the importance. Ms. Fillius said from a historical perspective, we're proceeding as what history tells us. Mr. Drew added it's important to provide the importance and background of what HSMC is and what we do. Ms. Walker asked about the Portrait of Mary. Ms. Green is very uncomfortable about the portrait of Mary hanging in the Chapel. Dr. Seidel said that he understands these differing viewpoints but wonders if some of the discussion has to do with a lack of information and that perhaps we need an onboarding process for new commissioners. Ms. Walker - the conversation is about what we want to say here. Dr. Seidel stated that he understands the discomfort of some, but to have the amount of information we have and not tell the full story is uncomfortable for him. As a museum, we don't shy away from things. We make certain concessions in our interpretations, for example, fire extinguishers, hvac, etc., but the question is what is the message we are sending people? In no other place in English speaking world could a building like the Chapel been built. That's the message and the story, although of course there are additional stories and exhibits that need to be told.

Ms. Walker noted that people are visual, especially when you walk in the space. Dr. King stated that this may have been in the plans for 30 years, but plans may change. She noted that she has spent her career studying urban Maryland. Focusing on the building reinforces the fact that Maryland was a Catholic colony. To the average visitor putting together this building it needs to be evolved. The pulpit and picture of Mary are political decisions. Mr. Drew suggested narrating the exhibit. The interior should not be altered, it can be explained through messaging. We are leaving out a pulpit, ask the visitor how you are going to perceive the space. Dr. King feels very strongly about this situation. Ms. Walker stated that she wants to make the space more useable. Dr. Seidel indicated leaving out the pulpit is pragmatic. Ms. Mathis – the chapel is based on history and archaeology, so what does the history say and what has history said? That should be a focus. Are we trying to correct history? If we are trying to come together and show what was documented as history, if there was a pulpit, one or the other should go. But if we are trying to tell real history, as painful as it is, we should do that.

Ms. Walker stated that she has heard from a number of people who do not feel the chapel should be used for celebration. Dr. Seidel - we have a focus on the chapel right now that is intended to tell a diverse story. Ms. Mathis if you are in the interpretive center, the entire story is told, and when you go to the chapel, the story continues. Ms. Walker, why didn't the Chair and Vice Chair know this?

Ms. Kohler stated "have to trust the staff, if we have a recommendation and we vote on that, I support the work the staff has done and as a board we have an obligation to advise." Dr. Seidel stated that he does not yet see a compelling reason to remove the

items from the chapel. We try to be faithful to the original fabric of this site, understanding times change, but pledges were made to people, and stewardship is important. From the beginning the message has been this is a radical experiment in the separation of church and state. People will always walk away with different impressions, we don't always have control over that. We control our signage, our script.

Ms. Kramer reported she appreciated the tour and the background. Mr. Harmon was on the tour and learned a lot, including the amount of graves. Dr. Miller gave a good history of what was there and what we know, but once he learned the history, he can't see it the same way any more.

Dr. Lewis stated what he thought the issue was what is the actual history of the chapel. Are we missing the religious founding and what it meant. Speaking to Kyle's concern, he is not certain it should be used for celebrations and such.

Dr. Parno discussed the Chapel slide - showing the chapel itself, the signage plan, the exhibit plan, the interpretive pavilion, there are four interpretive elements, and the Liberty of Conscience Exhibit needs to be put back on the CIP. Dr. King, how do we think about what goes here and there, Cecil Calvert had an idea.

Dr. Seidel said this was a great discussion, this is an ongoing conversation. Dr. King noted that what you decide will be reviewed carefully by museum experts in the future.

VII. Adjourn Move to Adjourn – Bonnie Green seconded by William Drew – the meeting ended at 12:55 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Saturday, September 7, 2024