

**Maryland Lynching Truth & Reconciliation Commission
Meeting #30**

Date: Monday, June 13, 2022

Time: 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Attendance:

David Armenti	X	Kirkland Hall	X	
Iris Barnes	X	Elizabeth Hughes	X	
Simone Barret	ABS	Tiesha Dupree Wilson	X	
(DeNeen Brown)	(ret)	Gary Norman (new appointee)	X	
Charles Chavis	ABS	Carl Snowden	X	
Roger Davidson	X	Marshall Stevenson	X	
Maya Davis	ABS	Stephanie Thompson	ABS	
Omar Eaton-Martinez	ABS	Zenita Hurley	X	
David Fakunle	X	Kristin McFarlane	X	
Chris Haley	X	Will Schwarz	X	
Nicolas Creary	X	(Amina Ayodeji-Ogundiran)	X	

Members of the public present:

Paula Himless, Sunny Schnitzer, Zoe Smith, Matthew Novick, Cheryl Jackson, Cheryl Mcleod, Elaine Rice Bachmann, Gary Norman, Jean Aden, Annie Wood

Call to Order:

Chair Fakunle called the meeting to order at 11:48am.

Approval of Minutes:

Chair Fakunle informed the meeting that there were no minutes for the May meeting. The recordings for May meeting will, therefore, be accepted for the records in place of minutes.

Public Comments:

Chair Fakunle urged members of the public to introduce themselves in the comment section.

Paula Himless, a member of the public was allowed to give a five minute presentation. A summary of her presentation is provided below.

Paula Himless a Baltimore County resident acknowledged the work of the Commission and the memorial lynching project. She has attended hearings and memorial events and is inspired by the work that the Commission is doing. She proposed that the Commission should engage the service of a public relation professional on a volunteer basis if necessary to create a social media campaign with a message to propel people (especially young) to feel that they can make changes in the society just by attending or viewing the proceedings of the Commission or the outcomes of the Lynching Memorial Projects. For the message to go viral, the PR professional or commission directly can have celebrity involvement such as Toni Braxton, Julie Bowen, Dave Chapelle, Hanna Faris, Joe Martin, Monique amongst others. Sections derived within the Commission’s website can be carefully constructed to drive the message on the importance of the Commission as well as the significance of community engagement. She ended by stating that, the stories can be heard by many.

Commissioner Armenti responded to Ms. Himless’ presentation by stating that having a PR person will be helpful to the Commission in getting the word out. He urged to commission to find a person who will do the work for free

or cheap.

Committee Reports:

Research Committee- Commissioner David Armenti

Commissioner Armenti started the research committee report by opening the conversation on the June 4th Baltimore County Hearing.

According to him, the Baltimore County hearing was a powerful event with several components that impacted the audience. There are also recommendations that will be helpful to the Commission. He pinpointed some challenges which calls for a redirection and needs to be addressed.

Highlights include:

- **Planning and preparation:** Commissioner Armenti stated that things went to the last minute. Marketing and getting access were not ideal. Therefore, having more planning and preparation time will help figure out missing pieces.
- **Strengthening Communication:** There is the need to enhance communication amongst commissioners as well as with coalition partners to have structures well laid out.
- **ASL:** A specific call out was lack of ASL interpreters, and this should not be acceptable for future hearings.
- **Participation of Commissioners:** Commissioners' participation before and during the event was not sufficient. Manpower was lacking and the local coalitions had to take on that. He urged the commissioners to engage more.

Commissioner Marshall added that it is important to establish responsibilities in terms of what the coalition is responsible for and what the Commission is responsible for. He thought that the hearing was first grade.

Commissioner Davidson acknowledged the work of the Baltimore County Coalition. He stressed however, that while collaboration is important, the hearings are solely the responsibility of the Commission. According to him, the Commission must develop capacity to stage a hearing in the absence of a local partner.

He added that there is the need for commissioners to have more physical presence during hearings. This should be an obligation to show that the Commission is trying to represent those families.

Commissioner Snowden asked if there is resources in the budget to bring a PR person.

Chair Fakunle responded stating that he will ask Council about accommodations in the budget. According to Chair Fakunle, there are questions about budget allocation, however, there are also opportunities to make adjustments as long as there is a reasonable justification to the Department of Justice.

Ms. Hurley added that there is flexibility in seeking budget amendment approval from Department of Justice, while there are no approved funds set aside for PR, there are opportunities for renegotiation. She added that commissioners can look at the budget and make recommendations on areas for amendment or renegotiation.

Pertaining ASL, Ms. Hurley reported that efforts were made to get an interpreter and three quotes were received. Unfortunately, the vendor was unable to provide interpreters for the event, and the notification came quite late. Moving forward, interpreters must be sought early enough, as soon as hearing days are locked down. Another concern she raised was why 90% of the interpreters were not able to provide services for the event. It is unusual to have many interpreters turn own such an opportunity. This also has to be looked into.

Commissioner Creary suggested that the Commission should establish a long term relationship with an ASL vendor to cover future hearings rather than sorting one on an event by event basis.

Ms. Hurley responded saying that she will work with Ms. McFarlane to see what the process is in terms of establishing a long term relationship while also abiding to state procurement laws.

Commissioner Stevenson suggested that a UMES faculty member could be contracted for ASL if they agree to assist. Ms. Hurley responded stating that contracting a UMES faculty member will be an interagency agreement between two government agencies. Ms. McFarlane added that that it will depend on if the faculty member is providing services on a personal level or if UMES is involved. Ms. Hurley and Ms. McFarlane will make more inquiries and provide some feedback.

Chair Fakunle told the meeting that despite the challenges faced, the Commission has accomplished a lot given the short period of time and wanted to acknowledge commissioners for the work that they are doing. Moving forward, he urged commissioners to leverage on the lessons learnt from the June 4 hearing, and use their collective strength, and resources to streamline the process to make the work more effective. He asked that commissioners map out different components that are necessary for a hearing and use this outline for future events.

Commissioner Creary explained that the Commission should have a default setting to go into hearings without a local coalition or partner, then if a partner is identified, then they can collaborate. He urged the Commission to develop capacity to carry out hearings on its' own.

Commissioner Armenti drew the attention of the Commission to a preexisting outline previously circulated to commissioners concerning division of labor about what is supposed to be commission versus coalition responsibility during a hearing. He advised that this pre-existing outline can be better written up and distributed internally within the Commission.

Chair Fakunle responded that following the establishment of assignments for commissioners, he is trying to be mindful of the relationship that commissioners have with counties for example, Commissioner Snowden in Anne Arundel County. He added that commissioners can be reallocated to counties where they have strong relationships because it makes the work easier.

Commissioner Snowden emphasized importance of deadlines. Specific times should be allocated and every county should have specific dates for upcoming hearing. He further noted that it is kind of difficult financially for people to be physically present at events, for example, gas prices going up. He advised that the Commission should make events as convenient enough for people, so live stream should be used when available to drive participation.

Chair Fakunle explained to the Commission that while the Commission strive to be able to stage a hearing on its own, the Commission is not there yet. That's why priorities are given to counties where there are stronger partners, connections and the research is more complete. The Commission does not have everything it need to single handedly stage a hearing. The Commission therefore, needs to know who is more ready to go now to avoid delays.

Chair Fakunle further informed the meeting that Bowie State University will be providing a staff that will work fully with the Commission. He opened up the floor for discussions on what roles the staff member will have to help fill in the gaps. According to him, this will be a full time staff member.

Commissioner Creary stated that the fulltime staff should be in charge of making all of the necessary arrangements for the hearings. The staff should implement the vision that the Commission have established and

also be in charge of implementing logistical top arrangements for meetings and hearings. In other words collaborating with the logistics committee.

Commissioner Armenti suggested that the Commission should write out a job description instead of Bowie State University.

Ms. McFarlane explained that Ms. Thompson has been pulling together what the duties will look like. The plan is to share the duties with Bowie State University so that there is clarity on what the duties of the staff should be. Plans are ongoing to have a meeting with Bowie in the nearest future

Chair Fakunle stated that this will be a continuing conversation. However, he will be looking for recommendations and documents on where to reallocate commissioners to.

Commissioner Armenti provided a list of counties that he believes are ready to go for hearings. They are Prince Georges, St. Mary, Anne Arundel, Carol, Kent and Frederick counties. He further discussed the sense of urgency in getting schedule and timing for hearings giving the time that the Commission has to conclude the work which is December, 2023. If there is no sense of urgency, the Commission may need to request another time extension to ensure that the work is thorough, he added.

Chair Fakunle thanked the meeting, and asked commissioners to be on the lookout for next steps on establishing connections with the counties that commissioners Armenti identified.

Announcements:

- Commissioner Armenti discussed utilization of counselors at the Baltimore hearing even though the counselors were present. He urged the Commission to better incorporate counselors in future events like have a verbal speaking role
- Commissioner Barnes encouraged everyone to celebrate Juneteenth and invited commissioners to come to Harford County at Hosanna school to celebrate 6 annual Juneteenth festival. Hossanaschoolmeseum.com is the website to have more information.
- Chair Fakunle also encouraged the meeting to celebrate Juneteenth.

Meeting Adjourned:

Chairman Fakunle thanked the commissioners and everyone present for their time. The meeting was adjourned at 12:59pm.