



Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission

October 19, 2020, at 2:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov

The Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) was called to order for a virtual meeting by the Commission's clerk, Lindley Griffin, in order to elect a chair and vice-chair of the Commission. The Commission selected Senator Jennifer L. McClellan as chair and Delegate Delores L. McQuinn as vice-chair, and Senator McClellan proceeded with presiding over the meeting.¹ The meeting began with introductions and opening remarks followed by presentations and discussion. The Commission welcomed new members Delegate Joshua G. Cole, Senator Adam P. Ebbin, Senator William M. Stanley, Jr., Rabbi Bruce Aft, and Dr. Laurant L. Lee. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [Commission's website](#). Video of the meeting is archived on the [Virginia Senate Video Stream](#) page.

Emancipation and Freedom Monument

Senator Jennifer L. McClellan, Chair; Joe Damico, Director, Department of General Services; Amigo Wade, Acting Director, Division of Legislative Services

Senator McClellan gave members an overview of the Commission's Emancipation and Freedom Monument (the Monument), which will be installed on Brown's Island in Richmond. The Monument, designed by Thomas Jay Warren of Oregon, will feature two 12-foot bronze figures representing newly freed slaves and will feature on its base 10 African American Virginians who have made significant contributions to emancipation and freedom in Virginia. Several matters relating to the Monument were presented and discussed by the Commission.

Site Status

Joe Damico, Director of the Department of General Services (DGS), updated members on the status of the Monument's site on Brown's Island. The City of Richmond, Venture Richmond, and the Department of General Services executed an agreement in December 2019 to donate 0.029 acres on Brown's Island to the Commonwealth as the site for the Monument. The three parties are prepared to close on the property once the Commonwealth's due diligence to accept the property is completed.

¹ **Members Present:** Senator Jennifer L. McClellan (chair), Delegate Delores L. McQuinn (vice-chair), Delegate Betsy B. Carr, Delegate Joshua G. Cole, Senator Adam P. Ebbin, Delegate C. Matthew Fariss, Senator Mamie E. Locke, Senator William M. Stanley, Jr., Delegate Rosalyn C. Tyler, Delegate Thomas C. Wright, Jr., Rabbi Bruce Aft, Reverend Ricardo Brown, Dr. Ronald L. Carey, Dr. Matthew S. Gibson, Dr. Laurant L. Lee, Kirk T. Schroder, J.D., Ph.D.

Members Absent: Edward McCoy, Juanita Owens Wyatt

As part of the Commonwealth's due diligence, DGS conducted phase 1 and phase 2 environmental studies, which found arsenic and chromium at the site at levels that are recommended for voluntary remediation. DGS recommends that this voluntary remediation take place. Under federal law, both the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth will be liable for cleanup of any contaminants found on Brown's Island once the property transfer is complete.

Prior to proceeding, DGS's environmental engineer recommends: (i) disclosing the results of the environmental studies to the City of Richmond, (ii) obtaining a Bona Fide Prospective Purchaser letter from the Department of Environmental Quality, and (iii) affirming that any contaminated waste generated during site preparation will be managed in accordance with environmental state and federal requirements.

On the advice of the Office of the Attorney General and in consultation with the Department of Environmental Quality, DGS has determined that it cannot close on the property until a site-wide soil management plan is agreed to. Therefore, DGS recommends that the Commission meet with DGS, the City of Richmond, and Venture Richmond to determine the next steps in coming to an agreement on a site-wide soil management plan.

The Commission voted to authorize the chair and staff to enter into discussions with all parties involved in order to determine options for the site on Brown's Island, to be proposed to the Commission at a later date.

Monument Status

Amigo Wade, Acting Director of the Division of Legislative Services, updated members on the status of the sculpture. The 12-foot bronze figures have been completed and are in storage at the foundry in California. Due to site issues and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the contract with the artist will need amendments to account for adjustments to the timeline, additional storage costs, and additional site costs once a new timeline and budget are known.

Fundraising

To date, the Commission has paid \$651,177 to fund the project, which includes two installments paid to Mr. Warren per the Commission's contract with the artist and reimbursement to Venture Richmond for the removal and reinstallation of the Mill, a statue that was previously installed on the Monument's site. As the contract currently exists, \$303,290 is due to the artist upon final approval of the Monument. The Commission will pay additional project management and legal costs when the project is completed.

The Commission has received \$134,703 in donations made through the Virginia Capitol Foundation, the Commission's fiscal agent. The Commission additionally has its own funds that it may use toward the project. In total, the Commission needs to raise about \$98,200 in order to complete the Monument. However, due to the additional work that is required at the site, it is likely that additional costs will be incurred.

Senator McClellan noted that the Commission has applied for several grants and has tentatively planned fundraising events in coordination with the University of Richmond and Virginia State University.



History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group

The History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group (the Work Group) met at 1:00 p.m. prior to the Commission's meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Work Group was unable to hold several public events across the state that members had tentatively planned for 2020. However, some local groups hosted virtual events recognizing Virginia's history of lynching. On September 26, a Virginia Department of Historic Resources historic marker was unveiled in Harrisonburg and dedicated to honor the memory of Charlotte Harris, the only African American woman lynched in Virginia. The marker is the third historic marker in Virginia dedicated to a lynching victim, following the installation of markers in Charles City County and Charlottesville in 2019.

The Work Group determined that it would move forward in 2021 with events in Richmond, Danville, Hampton Roads, and Culpeper.

2021 Resolution Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1871

The Commission voted to put forward a resolution in the 2021 Session of the General Assembly to mark the 150th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1871. The Commission also agreed to host a commemorative event to mark the anniversary. Delegate McQuinn agreed to patron the resolution in the House of Delegates, and Senator McClellan agreed to patron the resolution in the Senate.

Next Meeting

The Commission tentatively planned to meet next in December 2020.

For more information, see the [Commission's website](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

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