



## Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission

December 8, 2020, at 2:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

[mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov](http://mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov)

The Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) met virtually with Senator Jennifer L. McClellan, chair, presiding.<sup>1</sup> The meeting began with introductions and opening remarks followed by discussion. 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*

Several matters relating to the Emancipation and Freedom Monument (the Monument), dedicated to the contributions of African American Virginians in the fight for freedom, were 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 have executed an agreement to donate land on Brown's Island to the Commonwealth as the site for the Monument. As part of the Commonwealth's due diligence prior to closing on the property, 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. 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. On the advice of the Office of the Attorney General and in consultation with the Department of Environmental Quality, DGS determined that it cannot close on the property until a site-wide soil management plan is agreed to between the Commonwealth and the City of Richmond.

On November 20, 2020, DGS met with City of Richmond officials and legal advisors and the Office of Attorney General and formed work groups to (i) identify the tasks that the

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

Commonwealth and the City of Richmond must complete in order to place the Monument on Brown's Island, (ii) develop a timeline to complete these tasks, and (iii) estimate any additional costs. On December 18, DGS and the City of Richmond will meet again to review progress.

Senator McClellan noted that the statue is complete and in storage and will be delivered and installed quickly once the site issues are resolved, likely in 2021. Senator McClellan has spoken with the Governor's Office to discuss the possibility that costs of a soil management plan might be included in the state budget.

### *Fundraising*

Amigo Wade, Acting Director of the Division of Legislative Services, updated members on the status of the Commission's funds for the Monument. To date, the Commission has paid \$651,177 to fund the project. The Commission has received \$134,703 in donations made through the Virginia Capitol Foundation, the Commission's fiscal agent. The Commission also was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation.

Senator McClellan noted that the Commission has a \$200,000 grant application pending and has tentatively planned fundraising events in coordination with the University of Richmond and Virginia State University.

### **2021 Resolutions**

At its previous meeting, 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, which will be patroned by Delegate McQuinn in the House of Delegates and by Senator McClellan in the Senate.

The Commission discussed whether it would also put forth a resolution in the 2021 Session to recommend that a statue of Senator Yvonne B. Miller be placed in the Capitol. Members discussed whether the process should be initiated with a budget amendment or with a resolution and determined to look further into the process. The Commission voted to begin the process of commissioning a monument to honor Senator Yvonne B. Miller.

### **Virginia Union University Community Leaders Celebration**

The Commission annually purchases a table at Virginia Union University's Community Leaders Breakfast to support and attend the breakfast. The January 18, 2021, event will be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the Commission agreed to continue to support the event and voted to purchase a \$2,000 community sponsorship package for the program.

### **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. Senator McClellan updated the Commission on four events that the Work Group has planned for 2021:

- An event in Richmond, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 10, 2021, is planned to include (i) a teacher workshop on addressing the history of lynching, (ii) a walking tour of Richmond at selected sites that illustrate the history of lynching and of resistance to racial violence, (iii) a screening of the lynching documentary, *An Outrage*, and (iv) a guide to



conducting, recording, and archiving oral histories. Components of the event may be in-person or virtual, depending on the status of the pandemic in April.

- A virtual event in Hampton Roads in September is planned to include a panel discussion on what the community can do to recognize the history of lynching.
- An event in Culpeper in November will coincide with the anniversary of the lynching of Allie Thompson in Culpeper in 1918. The event will also involve the surrounding counties in order to recognize the broader history of lynching in the area.
- A virtual event, to include a film screening, is planned for Danville in the summer, geared toward middle and high school teachers.

Senator McClellan also updated members on efforts to memorialize three lynching victims in Wise County, as presented by Preston Mitchell of the Wise County Community Remembrance Project earlier in the Work Group meeting. Senator McClellan noted that the Commission's resolution acknowledging the history of lynching in the Commonwealth that was passed by the General Assembly in 2019 has helped to initiate and encourage these grassroots efforts.

### **Next Meeting**

The Commission tentatively planned to meet again in spring 2021.

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

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