



Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission

May 15, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

The Capitol, House Room 1

mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov

The Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) met in Richmond and began its meeting with the election of the Commission's chair and vice-chair. The Commission elected Delegate Delores L. McQuinn as chair and Senator Mamie E. Locke as vice-chair, and Delegate McQuinn proceeded with presiding over the meeting.¹ The meeting continued with introductions and opening remarks followed by presentations and discussion. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [Commission's meetings webpage](#). Video of the meeting is archived on the [House of Delegates Video Streaming](#) webpage.

Electronic Meeting Policy

Lily Jones, Legislative Projects Manager, Division of Legislative Services

A new provision of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq. of the Code of Virginia) went into effect in September 2022 allowing for virtual participation in meetings of public bodies following a public body's adoption of an electronic meeting policy. The provision allows for individuals to participate remotely at in-person meetings, provided that an in-person quorum is established at the meeting location, and for the entire public body to meet virtually, provided that two virtual meetings are not held consecutively. The Commission voted unanimously to adopt an electronic meeting policy to allow for virtual participation in Commission meetings.

Tribute to Senator Yvonne B. Miller

Delegate McQuinn, Chair

Members discussed the life and legacy of Senator Yvonne B. Miller and the Commission's plans for a memorial tribute to Senator Miller to be placed in Capitol Square. The Commission received a \$50,000 budget appropriation in fiscal year 2022 to begin the process of planning the memorial. The Commission will establish a subcommittee to determine how the project will go forward, and the subcommittee will coordinate its work with the tentative plans that are in

¹ **Members Present:** Delegate Delores L. McQuinn (chair), Senator Mamie E. Locke (vice-chair), Delegate Betsy B. Carr, Delegate Mike A. Cherry, Delegate A.C. Cordoza, Delegate Thomas C. Wright, Jr., Senator Adam P. Ebbin, Senator Ghazala F. Hashmi, Reverend Ricardo Brown, Dr. Matthew S. Gibson, Dr. Laurant L. Lee, Thomas Turner

Members Absent: Delegate C. Matthew Fariss, Senator William M. Stanley, Jr., Edward McCoy, Kirk T. Schroder, J.D., Ph.D., Dr. Karen Turner Ward, Paula P. Williams

development for honoring Senator Miller with a statue on the Virginia Women's Monument in Capitol Square.

The Reverend Dr. Curtis West Harris Monument Project

Herbert Bragg, Chairman, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Foundation, Inc.

Mr. Bragg presented the plans of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Foundation, Inc., (the Foundation) to place a monument to the Reverend Dr. Curtis West Harris in Hopewell. The monument will feature a bronze bust of Rev. Harris atop an African black granite pedestal. The monument is nearing completion and is projected to cost \$100,000 in total. The Foundation hopes to unveil the monument between July and September 2023. The Foundation is soliciting donations for the project and offering a miniature bust of Rev. Harris to any contributor that gives \$5,000 toward the monument. The Commission voted to purchase a miniature bust of Rev. Harris with a contribution in the amount of \$5,000 to support the project.

Library of Virginia Black Delegate Book Project: 'To Secure Justice for Ourselves': Black Virginians Claim Their Freedom

Dr. Gregg Kimball, Director of Public Services and Outreach, The Library of Virginia

The Library of Virginia is publishing a book in 2024 with University of Virginia Press based on biographies of Virginia's 92 Black legislators who served in the nineteenth century. The book derives in large part from research that began in 2012 with the Commission's African American Legislators in Virginia project, which the Commission completed in partnership with The Library of Virginia. Dr. Kimball requested the Commission's partnership on the book project and its assistance in covering \$2,500 of unexpected publishing costs. The Commission voted to partner with The Library of Virginia on the book project and to fund up to \$2,500 of the project's costs.

Status of Recent and Ongoing Projects of the Commission

Delegate McQuinn, Chair

The Chair reviewed several of the Commission's recent and ongoing projects and their statuses.

Emancipation and Freedom Monument

The Emancipation and Freedom Monument was completed and unveiled on Brown's Island in Richmond in September 2021 after nearly a decade of work. The 12-foot bronze statue features a man, woman, and infant newly freed from slavery and features on its base the profiles of 10 African American Virginians whose lives were dedicated to emancipation and freedom. The Commission will convene a subcommittee to determine any future plans for the monument site, which may include programming at the site or the inscription of additional names on the bricks of the plaza surrounding the monument.

History of Lynching in Virginia

The History of Lynching in Virginia work group was created in 2018 to develop programming to bring awareness and recognition of the history of lynching in Virginia. The work group put forth HJ 655 (McQuinn) and SJ 297 (McClellan) in the 2019 Regular Session of the General Assembly to acknowledge with profound regret the existence and acceptance of lynching in the Commonwealth; the resolutions passed both houses unanimously. The work group's plans for



statewide programming were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the work group plans to resume its work in the coming year.

King in Virginia

The Commission's King in Virginia project focused on the history of Dr. King's time in Virginia. In 2018 and 2019, the King in Virginia work group held a series of community discussions across the state in the 13 different localities that Dr. King visited in Virginia during his lifetime. The project is complete, but the Commission has discussed the possibility of reconstituting the King in Virginia work group and revisiting some of the locations and topics that it initially explored.

King Holiday Commemorations

Due to the timing of the legislative session, the Commission has not regularly held major annual commemorations in January for the King Holiday. The Commission plans to form a work group for the purpose of developing permanent and ongoing King Holiday programming.

Public Comment and Next Meeting

Jonette Meade Barley expressed support for the tribute to Senator Miller. Ms. Barley spoke on behalf Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., of which Senator Miller was a member.

Members will be polled for the date of the Commission's next meeting.

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

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