

# HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY

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

## HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY COMMISSION COMMISSION MEETING

**Saturday, March 2, 2024**

Campus Center 205

St. Mary's College of Maryland

St. Mary's City, MD 20686

**10:00am – 3:00pm**

**Full HSMC COMMISSION Board Meeting - Campus Center 205**

**Saturday, March 2 · 10:00am – 3:00pm**

**Time zone: America/New\_York**

**Google Meet joining info**

**Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/xqa-imrn-mto>**

**Or dial: (US) +1 904-323-0225 PIN: 564 618 119#**

**More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/xqa-imrn-mto?pin=2357401296895>**

Members Present: Rear Adm. Tim Heely, USN (Ret.), Chair; Ms. Bonnie Green, Dr. Owen Lewis, Ms. Judy Fillius, Mr. Kyle Harmon, Ms. Heidi Fleming, Ms. Adrienne Mathis, Ms. Hess Stinson, Ms. Bennett Wilson, Foundation President

Members Present Virtually: Mr. Bill Drew, Dr. Julie Schablitsky

Staff Present: Dr. John L. Seidel, Executive Director; Mr. Peter Carroccio, Mr. Joseph Kangas, Mr. Douglas Hunter, Dr. Henry Miller, Dr. Travis Parno, Mr. Peter Friesen

Guests: Mr. Bob Simmons, Ms. Cindy Kramer

10:00 Welcome and call to order at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

I. Approval of Minutes Bonnie Moved, Owen seconded Tim Heely, Chair

II. Chair's Report Tim Heely, Chair

Chairman Heely welcomed John Seidel, welcomed Bennett Wilson as the new Foundation President. Visitor Center is progressing. The OTR was denied across the board. Dr. Seidel will report on the Supplemental Budget Request. There will be an opportunity to discuss this in closed session. The Pete Himmelheber award will be awarded to Mary Bohanan, Captain Gates will be receiving the Cross Bottony award this year.

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- a. Budget Testimony Update
- b. MOU – Rebecca Salisbury has presented the MOU with the Foundation to Chairman Heely,

Election for Chair and Vice Chair will be done at closed session.

### III. Committee Updates

- a. Administration Ms. Fleming  
Met 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. Robust discussion on budget and management support. The Commission is expecting a \$163K budget shortfall, the staff is indicating school tours are down, we need to discuss how to address the shortfall. The discussion was to ask the Foundation for the shortfall. Another item was to discuss the Director of Advancement search. Working through hiring other staff and addressing the difficulty in hiring. We need to discuss the shortfall? Can we handle additional events to bring in funds? Ms. Fillius asked, is this really due to the school tours; Ms. Green added that the Madrigals event lost money. Dr. Seidel added that it's not just school groups, but the events revenue is down as well. Mr. Friesen added a number of factors regarding the school tours – the cost for the students from Montgomery County for example is \$75 per student with \$6 - \$7 coming to HSMC. Counties outside of St. Mary's County are required to use charter buses. 65-75% of museums are not back to pre-pandemic levels at this point. Dr. Seidel stressed that we need to diversify our income stream.

This speaks to a bigger issue regarding communication, marketing, public relations etc.

Ms. Fleming asked if we thought about reaching out to other schools, colleges, etc. We need to evaluate the return on investment here at HSMC.

Ms. Stinson asked about the HSMC staff traveling to other schools. Mr. Friesen indicated we have used an outreach program in the past, but the cost became prohibitive.

Ms. Fillius added that we should look at working with SMCM when they bring groups to the college. Mr. Friesen added that he has been included in the tours of High School counselors etc.

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Ms. Fleming added look at MWR with the Navy Base – MWR orients new sailors when they arrive.

Ms. Mathis asked if there has been a discussion with the Maryland State Department of Education and where HSMC fits in the History Curriculum. She suggested reaching out to them and instituting a partnership.

Ms. Green added that HSMC was once included in new student orientation for SMCM incoming students.

Dr. King added the Southern Maryland National Heritage area is a good resource.

Ms. Hinkle added this should not only fall to education, as it's a marketing and public relations opportunity.

b. Education Ms. Mathis  
Continued collaborating with Dr. Friesen on the Maryland Civil Rights Anniversary. The Committee is committed to support this. Mr. Friesen added that we have come up with the Road to Civil Rights, we will also do a panel discussion on Civil Rights. The staff is working on a number of stories around this anniversary. We will meet with the Center of Democracy as well.

c. Grounds Dr. Lewis  
Met in January to discuss the rental properties and the Chancellor's Point area.  
Dr. Lewis added he will be moving from the area, but hopes to continue to support the area; the museum feels like it now has a lot synergy.

Dr. Seidel added there are a number of people who want an experience at museums, and that there are ways in which fee-based experiences can support some of our building needs. This will be a topic for discussion in later months.

Dr. Seidel indicated that while we are looking at a larger property situation in general, we have had mold inspections done in several buildings that house staff (Admin, PR, the Faring's complex, and Hamett House). Based on the results of inspections, we need to move people out of the Hammett House,

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the Administration Building, the PR building. The interim plan is to remediate the Inn and the PR building and put staff in those two locations.

Ms. Fillius added that this could be a liability situation.

Dr. King asked who owns the Brown House, Mr. Kangas indicated this HSMC house is under repair. We have been trying to get to all the this done, and the house will be leased by Farming for Hunger (in collaboration with the College).

We will need to look carefully at deferred maintenance of the 14 rental buildings, and Mr. Kangas has a strong relationship with DGS to move forward.

Ms. Fleming added that we are short on resources, but we need to look at this in the future - health issues cannot be dismissed.

Dr. Seidel added we are trying to be certain that DGS is understands the situation.

Dr. Seidel noted that projects are moving forward.

Dr. Lewis asked about the old Maryland Dove. Dr. Seidel stated as soon as legislative session is over we will be looking at this situation.

Minutes must be approved: motion to approve by Ms. Bonnie Green and seconded by Ms. Rosemary Hinkle.

The Historic St. Mary's City Commissioners unanimously agree that the Commission should investigate mold and related issues in the HSMC workplace and should take prompt action to ensure remediation and related efforts are undertaken. We believe this is a health and welfare issue of the utmost importance. The motion was made by Heidi Fleming, seconded Bonnie Green,

d. Planning

Ms. Walker

Ms. Walker reported the committee had not met; the group decided to wait until the new ED was on board. They look forward to meeting in the next month. Ms. Fillius stated there is a Fort to 400 commission board how do we coordinate and move forward. Ms. Walker indicated the commission should

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have a member of HSMC. Ms. Walker added the relationship needs to be defined.

IV. Foundation Report Ms. Bennett Wilson, President  
Ms. Wilson reported the Foundation Board met and elections were held, Chris Longmore will be Vice President, and Margaret McFarland will be the new secretary. We are working on filling out roster and reinvigorating the committees and getting everyone on the same page.

V. Executive Director's Report Dr. John L. Seidel  
Everyone should have received a copy of our most recent activity report. Apologize for length, but it reflects both the amazing productivity of staff and the fact that we are in a transition in reporting format. Would like to get comments either after this report or from all you in the next week or so about what you find most useful and how you would like to see our reporting structured. I will come back to this at the end of this report.

Draw your attention to the Executive summary for highlights. Rather than simply repeating that, I invite questions. Before we get there, let me offer a couple of quick observations from my first 60 days:

- Truly impressed with the resources we steward here - archaeology, history, collections, reconstructed buildings and other infrastructure
- Even more impressive is our most important resource – the people who work and volunteer here.
  - passionate, dedicated, and have an extremely high level of professional competence.
  - I feel privileged to join them and to able to support them
- However, as is common with many organizations that have experienced rapid expansion, my sense is that HSMC's growth coalesced around exciting, eye-catching programs, without the requisite attention to the administrative backing that makes programs and future growth sustainable.
  - Need attention to administrative structure and staffing
  - Need to bring staff up to parity in compensation, goal that you have articulated as a Commission
  - Need a corresponding focus on deferred maintenance and aging infrastructure.
  - Particularly concerned that our colleagues and volunteers have healthy places in which to do their work
  - Although less exciting, these objectives are critical to the longer-term health and success of the organization.
- I am truly happy to be on board and so impressed with our potential moving forward.
  - Want to see forward movement on the Master Plan and the Stadium Authority study

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- my next set of priorities after session
- The 400th anniversary is a tremendous opportunity, on that we must take advantage of and maximize. But from a planning perspective, it is right around the corner.
- Welcome future Commission discussions of these opportunities and our plans.

With regards to reporting Dr. Seidel stated:

- There is redundancy – weed that out
- Do so with a template that we place on a shared drive
  - Sections for each division, with requested info that is relatively uniform
- Will add quantitative data
  - some things are obvious, such as visitation, memberships, school groups, financial data
  - others less obvious – volunteer/intern hours, social media engagement, trips/passenger numbers on Dove, etc.
  - Ideas welcome
- Intent is for us to be able to track our progress over the course of a year and from year to year.
- This raises an issue of the timing of Commission meetings
  - With quarterly meetings, we should report on a quarterly basis
  - But as with this meeting, we have incomplete numbers for the full quarter, which won't end until March 31
  - Should we think about synchronizing commission meetings with the reporting cycle?
    - Example – if this meeting was schedule for early April, you would have all data for the full quarter
  - This is critical to ensuring we have comparable data from quarter to quarter, year to year
- Turn it over to the Chair as to whether to discuss thoughts now or ask that you all give us feedback over the next week.

Ms. Langrill indicated that she will look at the legislation regarding meetings.

Ms. Fillius asked if there had been a meeting with the Piscataway, Dr. Seidel added that we have had staff meet and that Mr. Harmon has made contact.

## VI. New Business

- a. Captain Gates warrants emeritus status, it gives recognition where recognition is due. Motion Rosemary Hinkle, seconded by Owen Lewis.

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Motion approved.

b. Supplemental Budget Request

Dr. John L. Seidel

You all have a copy of this. Several important points before we get into the specifics:

- this is a subset of a very thoughtful OTR request that was more than twice the magnitude -that was rejected
- in an introductory meeting with our budget analyst, Seidel commented on some of our challenges
- analyst told me that him could submit a supplemental
- he then consulted with senior staff - stuck with OTR, since that had so much work behind it
  - preference would be to raise all lower level staff compensation to parity
    - price tag of roughly \$1.5 million - did not seem practical
  - so leadership team focused on what has been submitted, as the steps that would make the biggest difference the most quickly

VII. Closed Session

Tim Heely, Chair

Motion to go to closed session made by Mr. Owen Lewis seconded by Ms. Lucille Walker, motion to close approved.

Election of officers voice vote: Mr. Lewis motion to nominate Chairman Heely to remain in Chair position, and Vice Chair Green retain her position as well. Motion for these two candidates to continue in the roll of chair and vice chair was seconded by Ms. Hinkle. The motion was carried unanimously.

Session reopened:

Discussion regarding the Chapel –

Ms. Walker – concerns over the chapel? Is it a more catholic institution, a lot of concerns regarding the chapel? Funding request in the report?

Dr. Seidel responded this is a work in progress, most of the plans have been in place for quite a while. He has been concerned to assure himself that the chapel building itself does not drown out the important message of separation of church and state. He understands that the current objective is to represent the chapel as it was. But the fundamental questions are, what is the overall interpretation and what is the message? If we have a chapel that looks like we think it looked in the 17<sup>th</sup> c, it needs to hit on several important points, the separation of church and

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state, the uniqueness of this, and the policy reversal in the later 17<sup>th</sup> c. Ms. Mathis added that we must continue to tell the stories of the indigenous peoples, we must continue to bring in our tribal families our African cultures – talk about the resistance and celebrations. As commissioners we want to be aware of all levels of what is happening at St. Mary's. Ms. Walker suggested the tabernacle goes in the VC. Dr. Seidel noted we don't have very many fully reconstructed buildings, the Chapel is central, we have a two-phase dilemma in how we tell the story. Phase 1 is where the complete interpretive plan is not fully built, and managing interpretation and the take-away messages during that period. The second phase is easier - what visitors see when the site is fully interpreted. The walk-away story in both is not that Maryland is a catholic state. The building has to be looked at in a larger context. We understand the board wants to be made aware of every aspect of what is happening at all times, but there is a long history to this project, spanning many changes in commissioners. Ms. Walker - how do we get in front of the decisions that are being made? Dr. Seidel indicated he will look into the evolution of the chapel plans, and how to get the information to the members of the board. Ms. Fillius indicated that there is discussion, but we are sometimes unaware. Dr. Seidel said there are a number of suggestions being discussed here and questions that have not been resolved. He will look into it and return with additional information.

VIII. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn Hess Stinson, seconded by Owen Lewis. Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

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