

Florida Museum of Black History Task Force
Web Meeting, GoTo Meeting, ID: 897-007-723
Monday, September 25, 2023–11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Members Present In-Person: N/A

Members Present Via Webinar: Brian Butler; Howard Holley; Rep. Berny Jacques; Dr. Altony Lee; Rep. Kiyan Michael; Gayle Phillips; Sen. Bobby Powell; Terri Lipsey Scott; Sen. Geraldine Thompson.

Members Not Present: N/A

Department of State (DOS) Staff Members Present: Cord Byrd, Secretary of State; Jennifer Kennedy, Assistant Secretary of State/Chief of Staff; Alissa Lotane, Director of Historical Resources; Dr. Angela Tomlinson, Assistant Director for Historical Resources; John Grandage, Assistant Director for Historical Resources; Jon Morris, Deputy General Counsel; Jillian Pratt, Assistant General Counsel; Alexys Johnson, Executive Assistant, Division of Historical Resources; Jeremy Heiker, Historical Marker Program Coordinator; Trampas Alderman, Curator of Education and Public Engagement, Museum of Florida History; Lisa Barton, Director, Museum of Florida History; Danila Coppola, Development and Financial Director, Museum of Florida History; Lisa Dunbar, Senior Curator, Museum of Florida History; Kimberlyn Elliott, Senior Curator, Museum of Florida History; Jennifer England, Public Information Specialist, Division of Historical Resources; Khara Flemming, Administrative Assistant, Division of Historical Resources; Amanda Hamon, Executive Director, The Grove Museum; Elizabeth Johnson, Public Outreach and Information Coordinator, Office of External Affairs; Dr. Sarah Liko, Operations Manager, Division of Historical Resources; Daniel Webster, Florida History Day Coordinator, Museum of Florida History.

Members of the Public Present In-Person: Althemese Barnes.

Members of the Public Present Via Webinar: Carol Alexander; Imani Asukile; Pasha Baker; Dr. Martha Bireda; Sharon Blake; Andrea Bruton; Nancy Chanin; Ciara Cosby; Jaha Cummings; King Duncan; Patsy Eccles; Charlene Farrington; Vivian Filer; Anika Hamilton; Yvonne Hill; Dr. Tameka Hobbs; Thomas Jackson; Walter Gulley, Jr.; Dr. Natalie King-Pedroso; Dr. Nancy Lawther; Sonya Mallard; Wilma McKay; Eric Miller; Wanda Milton-Whitehead; Velma Monteiro-Tribble; Harriet Myers; Jonnie Perry; Floyd Phillips; Rosa Pickett; Deloris E. Rentz; Dianne Robinson; Sandra Rooks; Gwendolyn Thomas; William Thomas, Jr.; Adonnica Toler; Lloyd Washington; Autumn Watkins Holloway; Diane Williams-Cox.

Item I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Alissa Lotane called the meeting to order at 11:09 a.m. Roll call confirmed that all Task Force members were in attendance, via webinar.

Item II. Welcome

Secretary of State Cord Byrd welcomed Task Force members, discussed the purpose of the Task Force, and thanked members for their willingness to serve.

Item III. Introduction of Task Force Members

Task Force members introduced themselves.

Item IV. Overview of Legislation including Task Force Responsibilities, Goals, & Objectives

Alissa Lotane provided an overview of the legislation that created the Task Force (CS/CS/HB 1441, Chapter 2023-72, Laws of Florida), including the intended role of Task Force members in making recommendations on a proposed future museum location; the design of the building and museum exhibits; museum operations, administration, and marketing; a financial sustainability transition plan for the museum to become self-sufficient; and how the museum's programs will contribute to curriculum and standards in Florida schools. Alissa Lotane also discussed DOS responsibilities for drafting the final report of the Task Force, handling meeting logistics, and handling member travel.

Item V. Election of Chairperson

Task Force members heard nominations for Chairperson. Sen. Powell nominated Sen. Thompson and Rep. Michael nominated Rep. Jacques. Both Sen. Thompson and Rep. Jacques accepted their nominations. Terri Lipsey Scott moved to close nominations and Brian Butler seconded. The motion passed.

Task Force members then held a roll call vote, in the order in which their names appear on the meeting materials roster:

Rep. Berny Jacques voted for Rep. Berny Jacques

Brian Butler voted for Sen. Geraldine Thompson

Dr. Altony Lee voted for Rep. Berny Jacques

Sen. Bobby Powell voted for Sen. Geraldine Thompson

Sen. Geraldine Thompson voted for Sen. Geraldine Thompson

Terri Lipsey Scott voted for Sen. Geraldine Thompson

Rep. Kiyon Michael voted for Rep. Berny Jacques

Howard Holley voted for Rep. Berny Jacques

Gayle Phillips voted for Sen. Geraldine Thompson

Based on the roll call vote, Task Force members elected Sen. Thompson as Chairperson with five votes. Rep. Jacques received four votes.

Item VII. Future Meeting Dates, Number of Meetings, and Agendas

The next Task Force meeting will be held on October 26, 2023. The third meeting will be on November 13, 2023. Task Force members requested that DOS staff circulate a poll to help determine possible future meeting times and dates between December 2023 and June 2024. Task Force members will discuss the number of meetings, meeting locations, and items to be considered on each agenda at future meetings, starting in October 2023.

Item VIII. Sunshine Law and Public Records Presentation

DOS Deputy General Counsel Jon Morris provided an overview of Florida's Sunshine Laws and Public Records Laws as it pertains to the work of the Task Force. DOS staff will distribute the presentation to all Task Force members.

Item IX. Task Force Open Discussion and Questions

Task Force members discussed creating an academic advisory panel and releasing poll questions to survey the public for input on the future museum. Alissa Lotane discussed the state process for procuring architectural design services. Task Force members also discussed hosting listening tour sessions to gather additional public input about the future museum.

Item XI. Public Comment

Several members of the public provided comments.

Althemese Barnes, founding Director of the John G. Riley Center and Museum and the Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network (FAAHPN), spoke about efforts in the past to engage leaders from the National Museum of African American History and Culture with Black history in Florida. She also spoke about FAAHPN accomplishments, including Institute on Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grants, economic impact studies, and internships.

Jaha Cummings spoke about the need to make more widely known the existing resources already developed by FAAHPN members, including the Blanchard House Museum in Punta Gorda, and voiced concern about how interest in and funding for the new museum may impact FAAHPN member sites and smaller museums.

Sen. Thompson discussed her role in the Wells' Built Museum in Orlando and her work in historic preservation, and how the new proposed museum would serve as a statewide hub and not diminish the work of or the resources available to FAAHPN members.

Sen. Powell discussed how the new museum would create a broader economic impact, but not at the expense of FAAHPN member sites or other smaller, local museums.

Walter Gulley commented in support of establishing an academic advisory committee to assist the Task Force.

Charlene Farrington Jones, from the Spady Cultural Heritage Museum in Delray Beach, expressed concerns about what would happen to existing FAAHPN funding once the new museum comes into existence.

Dr. Martha Bireda, from the Blanchard House Museum in Punta Gorda, expressed concerns about existing FAAHPN funding once the new museum came into existence. Dr. Bireda also expressed interest in seeing acknowledgment in the new museum about the work of FAAHPN.

Thomas Jackson spoke about the importance of Black contributions during Florida's Spanish period, including Fort Mose and other sites in St. Augustine.

Sen. Thompson discussed Estevanico, who is considered the first documented person of African descent to participate in Spanish expeditions in North America.

Lloyd Washington, from Jacksonville, wished the Task Force well and thanked them for their efforts.

Sen. Thompson mentioned programming at the historic Ritz Theater in Jacksonville and efforts to preserve the stories of sites demolished in the past.

Pasha Baker, from the Goldsboro West Side Community Historical Association in Sanford, discussed how many of the FAAHPN sites were preserved by earlier generations, often at their own expense, and how these institutions have worked together to promote Black history across generations.

Sandra Rooks, from the Pinellas County African American History Museum, spoke about recovering erased Black cemeteries; how FAAHPN members have worked to preserve historic buildings; and concerns about future funding for small museums once the new museum comes into existence.

Sen. Thompson and Terri Lipsey Scott spoke about their own work and leadership in the museum field and the need to preserve funding for small museums, along with moving forward on the development of a new statewide Black history museum.

Task Force members discussed establishing an academic advisory committee. Terri Lipsey Scott moved to vote on each recommended advisor at a future meeting. Dr. Altony Lee seconded. The motion passed. Task Force members should send their recommendations to DOS staff.

Task Force members requested that the election of a Vice Chair be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

Item XII. Adjourn

Sen. Thompson moved to adjourn the meeting. Terri Lipsey Scott seconded. The meeting adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

Beraldine F. Thompson Presiding Officer

Missie Ham State Historic Preservation Officer and Director, Division of Historical Resources

Approved: 3/7/24