

Mayor's African American Advisory Board

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

6:00 pm

Meeting Location: The Legends Center, 5130 Soutel Dr., 32208 – Community Room

Meeting Attendance: MAAAB Chair, Dr. Barbara Darby; Dr. Audrieanna Burgin; Latrina Dowdell; Kelly Frazier; Errol White; Menelik Vereen; Conrad Jennings; Dr. Ronetta Wards.

Excused: Dawn Curling.

Elected Officials, COJ Staff: Hank Rogers.

Guests: Ernest White; Pearl White; Ernest J. Smith, III; Sandra Evans; Louis Myers; Ken Covington; Vanessa Cullins Hopkins.

Meeting Summary:

1. **Call to Order and Verify Quorum** – Chair Darby called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm and verified that a quorum was present.
2. **A Moment of Centering** – Board member Errol White provided comments on Veterans' Day – On the 11th day of the 11th month at the 11th hour, the 1918 Armistice was signed, ending World War I. Their Service... Their Sacrifice.

Mr. White asked for reflection on those African Americans who served and continue to inspire us through their resilience, strength and leadership.
3. **Approval and Acceptance of Agenda** – It was properly moved and seconded that the agenda be accepted as presented.
4. **Approval of Previous Month's Minutes** – It was properly moved and seconded that the October 8, 2025, meeting minutes be accepted.
5. **Mayor's Staff Updates** – Not Present.
6. **Public Comments/Announcements:**
 - Mr. Myers commented that 15 executions were carried out in Florida, five were veterans and two more will be executed soon. He questions if they had proper mental health care.
 - Board member White noted that the Florida State Legislature denied sentencing “life” instead of the death penalty.
 - Mr. Ernest Smtih thanked the Board for the work it does and for visiting the CPACs (Citizen Planning Advisory Committees). He extended an invitation to the Board to attend an Urban Core CPAC Meeting within the first quarter of the new year.
 - Chair Darby accepted the invitation and noted that she will coordinate with Ms. Henry.
 - Mr. Ken Covington asked about the “charge” of the Board, what outcomes are expected and how it plans to affect the community is important. Is there an agenda?

- Board Chair Darby responded that the board is very much aware of community expectations and is moving to assure the community of tangible evidence of the Board's efforts. She also encouraged Mr. Covington to avail himself of past Board minutes.

Today, the board will be sending a cover letter to the Mayor and City Council with recommendations from the Veterans and Military Affairs and Economy and Infrastructure Committees. At tonight's meeting, the Board will be discussing recommendations from the Health and Public Safety Committee to be shared with the Mayor and City Council.

As a way to gather information from the public, the board developed a Community Survey, consisting of five questions. Please help us get the word out.

7. Chair's Report:

- 2026 Meeting Schedule – Ms. Henry was asked to draft a schedule with a quarterly evening meeting, preferably off site and at different parts of town. Regular meetings will continue to be held at 9:30 a.m., the second Wednesday of each month in the Ed Ball Building.
- Chair Darby will provide a cover letter for both sets of committee recommendations: A) Economy and Infrastructure and Veterans and Military Affairs, and B) Health and Public Safety.
- The Annual Report is due in January and Dr. Darby will prepare a draft for review and discussion by the Board.
- Board member Kiaira Nixon has submitted her letter of resignation from the board, effective November 30, 2025. Chair Darby will write a letter of acknowledgement and appreciation. Mr. Garrett Dennis has been notified of Ms. Nixon's resignation from the board.

Dr. Burgin and Ms. Nixon were Co-Chairs of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. Dr. Wards will step in as Co-Chair and Dr. Darby has asked Mr. Jennings to join that committee.

8. Committee Reports:

- **Program & Arts and Culture Committees** – Dr. Burgin reported that the committees met on October 28, 2025, to begin planning for the Black History Month Event. Tentative date: Friday, February 6, 2026. The plan is to have art showcased in the hallway of the Main Public Library, music by a local Gullah Geechee choir. The committee would like to honor a key figure. Please submit any names/recommendations to Ms. Henry and be sure to indicate why that person should be honored/recognized. Dr. Darby suggested that if possible, suggestions could be requested from community members. Report was accepted.
- **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** – Dr. Burgin stated that the committee met on October 27, 2025. Their goal is to present recommendations to be read at tonight's meeting. Per board member Vereen, one recommendation is to bring "SNAP" (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Benefits to the Melanin Market – fresh access bucks. There is a federal grant available to help leverage spending in one's own community. The Mayor would need to approve and the

Melanin Market would have to apply for the grant, the board could lend support. The grant would cover the cost of a machine to process SNAP dollars.

- **Health and Public Safety Committee** – Board member Dowdell read from her committee report and listed several recommendations. After discussion, Ms. Dowdell was asked to provide additional details to her recommendations – who does the training? When to refer? How to address liability concerns?
 - Dr. Darby stated that the concepts are impactful and wanted to know if other agencies are doing similar work. How do they handle liability issues? She would also like information on budgetary impacts. Please consult with agencies such as United Way, Urban League, etc. There are no objections to the conceptual framework, but more details are needed. Have the committee investigate and bring back for further discussion.
- **Veterans and Military Affairs** – Board member White provided a list of resources for veterans:
 - The Veterans Council has resources; Mayport Food Farmacy for active-duty military; the United Way and 211 have veteran specific services; the City of Jacksonville is planning a Vetraprenuer Summit (date is pending). All Veterans and Military Affairs events are listed on the City of Jacksonville’s Military Affairs and Veterans website: Jacksonville.gov - Military Affairs and Veterans Department.

Mr. White is working on dates for a visit to the 125 fighter wing.

The next meeting of the Veterans and Military Affairs Committee is November 18, 2025, at 6:30 pm at the Main Public Library, first floor lounge.

Mr. White will virtually attend the November Meeting of the Southeast CPAC.

Chair Darby thanked each committee chair and reminded them not to despair or grow tired in their good works for the community.

9. Unfinished Business – None.

10. New Business – The 2025 annual report of the board, will be a comprehensive report and will cover those activities the board has participated in, the breadth of issues discussed, committee recommendations, community survey data, and the Black history Month and Juneteenth Events.

In preparation for the final report, please forward to Ms. Henry any notes of importance and a paragraph outside of your committee recommendations.

11. Next Steps/Board's Open Forum:

- L. Dowdell – January 26, 2026 – Men’s Mental Health Community Event
- K. Frazier – thanked those board members who came out and supported the NAACP event.
- E. White – noted that his parents are in attendance tonight. He also asked for the sign-up sheet to volunteer at the Melanin Market.
- B. Darby – thanked the community again for coming out and encouraged them to participate in the MAAAB Community Survey by using the QR code. The board appreciates the opportunity to hear directly from the community.

12. Adjournment – It was properly moved and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm

The next MAAAB Meeting will be Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at the Ed Ball Building, 214 N. Hogan St., at 9:30 a.m. in the first floor Hearing Room #1002.

Submitted by:

Edwina Henry
Board Coordinator

Dr. Barbara Darby
Board Chair