

Mayor's African American Advisory Board – MAAAB

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

9:30 a.m.

Location: Ed Ball Building, 214 N. Hogan Street, 32202 – First Floor Hearing Room #1002

Meeting Attendance: Lee Brown, Audrieanna Burgin, Dawn Curling, Chair Barbra Darby, LaTrina Dowdell, Kelly Frazier, Ronetta Wards, Errol White and Menelik Vereen.

Excused: Kiara Nixon.

Staff and Elected Officials: Garrett Dennis, Mayor's Boards and Commissions Liaison; Andrea Myers, Ethics Program and Training Manager, Office of Ethics, Compliance and Oversight; Lisa Ransom, Neighborhood Services Office; Edwina Henry, Neighborhood Services Office and Board Coordinator.

Guests: Jessica and Owaman Magerg; Kemba Kujichaqlia; Spencer Jones; Barwey Roberts; Monique Stewart; Patrina Dixon; Fricka Greene; Mayeso Ramsey Afolayan; Gail Knight; Dana Maule; Marsahsray Wellington.

Meeting Summary

- 1. Call to Order and Verify Quorum** – The Mayor's African American Advisory Board (MAAAB) Meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m., and Edwina Henry, Board Coordinator, confirmed that a quorum was present.
- 2. A Moment of Centering** – Dr. Barbara Darby, Chair: "Pause to take the day as it is..."
- 3. Approval of Agenda** – The Meeting agenda was adopted.
- 4. Approval of Previous Meeting Summary** – The March 12, 2025, Meeting Summary was adopted as presented.
- 5. Presenter: Andra Myers**, Ethics Program and Training Manager, Office of Ethics Compliance and Oversight

Ms. Myers reiterated that all Board and Commission members must take the required Ethics Training within six months of appointment. Ms. Myers stated that public and government rules are designed to protect public resources, public officials and to promote public trust and transparency.

City of Jacksonville staff assigned to Boards and Commissions are required at the main meeting but not required at sub-committee meetings. Subcommittee chairs should appoint someone to take minutes.

Other topics covered included conflicts of interest. Ms. Myers requested any board member to contact her to discuss specific cases where there may be the potential for conflicts of interest.

Regarding social media, board members may place information about meetings on their personal social media sites, but most city boards do not have their own social media sites. The board can request the city's public affairs office to post meetings and events on the city's web pages at www.coj.net.

On the question of engaging with the community by conducting surveys at a quarterly event held by another MAAAB member, Ms. Myers responded that a deeper conversation with the ethics office is warranted. It is important for the board to not show favoritism over one organization over others.

Andrea Myers – (904) 255-5509 or AHMyers@coj.net

- 6. Mayor's Staff Updates** – Mr. Garrett Dennis, Mayor's Boards and Commissions Liaison Mr. Dennis introduced Mr. Menelik Vereen, appointed April 9, 2025, to fill one of the MAAAB's vacancies.

Board Chair Darby welcomed Mr. Vereen and asked him to say a few words. Mr. Vereen was pleased to be appointed to the Board, on the recommendation of Vice Chair Ronetta Wards. He is a Business Associate with the Deutsche Bank: Global Corporate Trust.

- 7. Chair's Report** - Board Chair Darby asked that when Board members attend community meetings, to please be sure to share during the Board meetings.

Meetings attended this month by the Chair:

- The MAAAB Health & Public Safety Committee meeting
- The Urban Core CPAC April meeting
- The Interfaith Coalition for Action, Reconciliation and Empowerment (ICARE) meeting, where Sheriff T.K. Waters was commended for the reduction of murders in the city; and Mayor Deegan was invited to work with ICARE to form a formal housing trust fund.

8. Committee Reports –

- **Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee:** Chair Dawn Curling is working with the Board Coordinator to find a meeting location downtown.
- **Economy & Infrastructure Committee:** Co-Chair Audrieanna Burgin reported that the committee met on March 25, 2025, at the Main Public Library. The committee is reviewing data and various reports. The committee is also exploring several suggestions for a community educational event.
- **Health & Public Safety Committee:** Chair LaTrina Dowdell stated that the committee met on April 7, 2025, at the Mary L. Singleton Center. The next meeting will be held on May 5, 2025. Ms. Dowdell reported that a chief concern is how to ensure that information concerning health initiatives reaches the public.
- **Military & Veterans Affairs Committee:** Co-Chair Errol White reported that the committee met on March 5, 2025, at the Main Public Library. Their next meeting is scheduled for May. The Board Coordinator will confirm the date. Housing seems to be the largest concern for this population. Mr. White will need to speak with the Ethics Office, as he serves on another board with overlapping interests with the MAAAB.

- **Program Committee:** Co-Chair Dr. Burgin indicated that the committee has met twice concerning the planning of the 2025 Juneteenth Celebration. The committee is currently awaiting Mayor Deegan’s availability to set the day and time of the event. The committee would like to hold the celebration in the Main Public Library’s Hicks Auditorium, which would allow for a larger capacity and seating. The Program Committee is working collaboratively with the Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee on planning the Juneteenth Celebration.

The tentative Juneteenth Program Outline is as follows:

- **Opening Performance**
- **Welcome & Acknowledgements:** MAAAB Members Brown and Frazier
- **Invocation:** Reverend Gunn
- **Song:** The committee is accepting recommendations for soloists
- **Poem:** The committee is accepting recommendations
- **Mayor’s Introduction:** Board Chair Darby
- **Mayor Donna Deegan’s remarks**
- **Keynote Speaker:** The committee is accepting recommendations
- **Acknowledgement of participants and present Certificates of Appreciation:** MAAAB Member Dowdell
- **Closing Remarks:** MAAAB Member White, with Nixon as alternate
- The committee will also look for ways to include the new board member
- **Celebration Theme:** The committee is looking for input from the board.
- **Next Program Committee Meeting:** April 29 – the Board Coordinator will confirm
- **NOTE:** Co-Chair Burgin will be out of town on business during the month of May, and Committee Member Frazier has agreed to chair the Program Committee meetings in May.

9. **New Business:** Board Chair Darby asked that in all future meeting notices contain information on how to enter the Main Public Library after 6 pm, as the main doors on Laura Street are locked after 6 pm. The Board Coordinator indicated that going forward all meeting notices for the Main Public Library will contain instructions on how to enter the library after 6 pm.

10. Unfinished Business:

- a) On the matter of setting the staggered terms for the MAAAB Members, each member was asked to indicate their preference. Executive Order 2024-02, Section 3, states that the members of the board shall serve for terms of four (4) years and of those members initially appointed, three members shall serve for two years; three members shall serve for three years; and five members shall serve for four years.

It was agreed that the two new members, filling the initial vacancies, will serve for two years. Each member was given a form on which to select their preferred term. Results will be shared at the May meeting.

- b) Chair Darby continued the discussion pertaining to the board sending initial recommendations to Mayor Deegan and City Council. After discussion, it was decided that recommendations would be sent to the Mayor and City Council on a quarterly basis, as well as a re-cap of the recommendations in the annual report.

Questions arose as to what the process should be for forwarding the recommendations, should a response be expected and if so, what should be the timeframe for acknowledgement of receipt of recommendations and any response. The question will be sent to Dr. Ahmed and Mr. Dennis and placed on May 14, 2025, Board Agenda for discussion.

- c) After discussion, it was decided that the Board will identify a quarterly evening meeting, with November as the tentative first evening meeting.

Additionally, it was announced that due to the National Neighborhoods USA (NUSA) Conference, hosted by the City of Jacksonville's Neighborhoods Department, the Board Coordinator would not be available during the week of May 19 through 23. Additional information about the NUSA Conference will be shared with the Board at the May meeting.

11. Next Steps/Board's Open Forum:

Most board members echoed the Chair's sentiment for holding an evening meeting.

Chair Darby requested to be added to the email list for all six of the Citizens Advisory Planning Committees (CPACs) and that she will try to attend meetings in the different planning districts when possible. She also stated that she would like access to the city's Neighborhood Directory.

Board Co-Chair Wards indicated that she would like to invite the Director of Public Works, Nina Sickler, to address the board on construction projects underway.

The Board Coordinator will follow up with invitations to the various departments to send a representative to address the board on various matters.

12. Public Comments: (three-minute limit)

Board Chair Darby indicated that moving forward, she would like to see the Public Comments moved up on the agenda, to follow the Mayor's Staff Updates and just before the Chair's Report.

Three members of the community offered comments and shared information about community events.

13. Meeting Adjourned at 11:57 am.

The Next Mayor's African American Advisory Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 9:30 am, in the Ed Ball Building first floor hearing room.