

Mayor's African American Advisory Board – MAAAB

Wednesday, March 12, 2025
9:30 a.m.

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

Meeting Attendance

Board Members: Lee Brown, Audrieanna Burgin, Chair Barbara Darby, LaTrina Dowdell, Kelly Frazier, Kiara Nixon, and Errol White.

Excused: Dawn Curling and Vice Chair Ronetta Wards.

Staff and Elected Officials: Dr. Parvez Ahmed, Chief of Analytics and Special Advisor to the Mayor; Dylan Reingold, Deputy General Counsel; Monica Cichowlas, Customer Service Manager – 630-CITY; Lisa Ransom, Neighborhood Services Manager, and Edwina Henry, Neighborhood Coordinator.

Guests: Lakia Spain, Ali Steed, Christie Bird, J. Maceo George, Keneth Covington, Robert Fuller, Jewel Flornby, Ronda Cummings, Joy White, Deborah Brill, Sondra Evans, Monique Stewart, Naujia Easton.

Meeting Summary

1. **Call to Order and Verify Quorum** – The Mayor's African American Advisory Board (MAAAB) Meeting was called to order at 9:35 am, and Edwina Henry confirmed that a quorum was present.
2. **A Moment of Centering** – Lee Brown
3. **Approval of Agenda** – The meeting agenda was approved.
4. **Approval of Previous Meeting Summary** – The meeting summaries were approved.
5. **Mayor's Staff Updates:**
 - **Monica Cichowlas, Customer Service Manager – 630-CITY**

Ms. Cichowlas provided an overview and distributed the 630-CITY brochure. She discussed the process of making a service request and how receiving a tracking number through 630-CITY allows citizens to receive updates and to track their complaint online. Ms. Cichowlas clarified that 630-CITY does not resolve complaints, but that their role is to take the information and route it on to the appropriate department or agency for investigation and/or resolution.

Citizens may call (904) 630-CITY (2489) or use the app www.myjax.custhelp.com to register complaints, request services or ask city related questions. Another benefit of using 630-CITY or MyJax, is that it offers transparency and accountability. Aggregate performance data is captured on Mayor Deegan's Transparency Dashboards. To access the MyJax Dashboard, go to www.jacksonville.gov/mayor/mayor-s-transparency-dashboards/myjax-dashboard

- When asked about response turn-round times, Ms. Cichowlas indicated that turn-around times are based on the service agency. The 630-CITY system will automatically generate a ticket reference number and will approximate the completion date. Citizens are required to provide their contact information if the servicing agency has follow-up questions.
- The 630-CITY system also has pre-recorded information and announcements, especially during storm season. The system also generates a recorded message for frequently asked questions.
- Citizens who are not tech savvy or who don't have access to technology, may either call 630-CITY to come directly to their offices at 214 N. Hogan, First Floor of the Ed Ball Building.
- **Dylan Reingold, Deputy General Counsel**
Mr. Reingold spoke on the topics of Florida State Sunshine Laws and Public Records. Sunshine laws pertain to two or more members of the same board discussing information which may reasonably or foreseeably come before the board. He stated that one-way communications via text are fine, just do not "reply to all." Mr. Reingold reminded the MAAAB members to keep conversations "between the gavel."

Closed Sessions are not permitted. All board business must be open to the public, properly noticed, etc. The only exception would be matters pertaining to litigation, and perhaps a few other very specific instances.

All meetings are to be properly noticed and minutes are to be taken by staff. Staff is to coordinate appropriate meeting locations.

With respect to the MAAAB attending events to gather information from the community, "fact finding" should be limited to "listening and observing," Mr. Reingold also commented on the Board's interest in conducting surveys, which would be acceptable as long as the information gained would be used to make recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council.

Any information that is used to conduct public business is a public record. Personal notes, if not shared, are not considered public records. However, if those notes are shared in any way, then they are public records and are subject to public record requests.

On the question of By-Laws, Mr. Reingold stated that the By-Laws must stay within the confines of the authority granted by the Executive Order. The draft By-Laws submitted by the MAAAB are under review.

Regarding the two MAAAB vacancies, Mr. Reingold noted that Mayor Deegan's Board and Commissions Liaison, Mr. Garrett Dennis, is working diligently to fill vacancies across the city.

The State of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, maintains a Records Retention Schedule, which is available online: [General Records Schedules - Division of Library and Information Services - Florida Department of State](#)

- **Dr. Parvez Ahmed, Chief of Analytics, Special Assistant to the Mayor**

Dr. Ahmed officially thanked the MAAAB for a well-done Black History Month Celebration in the Atrium of City Hall.

He stated that the charge to the MAAAB is to organize both the Black History Month Celebration and a Juneteenth Celebration and to ensure that it is open and accessible to the public. Dr. Ahmed instructed the Board to communicate their needs through staff.

Dr. Ahmed also stated that the Board should work with staff to get speakers scheduled. As an Advisory Board, MAAAB should listen to public concerns with the intent of making recommendations. Staff will forward the recommendations to either himself, Mr. Dennis or both.

Dr. Ahmed stated that he sees no problem with the MAAAB Committee structure. Each committee meeting needs to be staffed, minutes taken, meeting properly noticed, etc.; however, he did caution the Board to be judicious about staff time. Voluntary committee support is expected with events.

The Heritage Month events, like the Black History Month Celebration, reflect the community – their voice and the moment. It is hoped that the Heritage Month events will foster more community engagement.

Regarding the by-laws discussion, Dr. Ahmed noted that he and Mr. Dennis will be working on creating a set of uniform by-laws for advisory boards. There are several new advisory boards being proposed.

Board Chair Darby stated that having uniformed by-laws would be useful. She wanted to know what were the initial thoughts about the role the MAAAB would play regarding the MLK Breakfast?

Dr. Ahmed stated that the MLK Breakfast planning meetings are open to the public – he will forward the meeting schedule to staff to share with the Board. The bulk of the programming of the breakfast rests with the partners: NAACP, Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, the Urban League and Mayor's Office; however, the MAAAB should send a representative to the meetings.

Dr. Ahmed suggested Ms. Henry contact Ms. Johnetta Moore, Chief of Social Services, regarding the Asian American Advisory Board's upcoming event for suggestions about coordinating the Board's Juneteenth event.

6. Chair's Report – Dr. Darby commended Dr. Burgin and the Board's Program Committee on a spectacular job with the Black History Month Celebration and noted that she heard many wonderful reviews. Dr. Darby indicated that she attended the February 26, 2026, Program Committee Meeting, where final details of the Black History Month Celebration were discussed.

She requested that as the various committees meet and gather public comments, to start thinking about recommendations to bring back to the full Board for discussion.

7. Committee Reports -

- **Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee** – First meeting was held February 25, 2025, at 6 pm at the Legends Center, 5130 Soutel Dr. One attendee spoke about the importance of astronomy and expressed an interest in hosting telescope viewing events for the community, in addition to offering two-way communication skills. The discussion underscored the potential for both educational outreach and emergency preparedness initiatives. Date for the next meeting – to be determined.
- **Economy & Infrastructure Committee** – First meeting was held February 25, 2025, at the Mary L. Singleton Senior Center, 150 E. 1st Street, in the Green Room. The committee selected Kiaira Nixon and Dr. Adrianna Burgin as Committee Co-Chairs. The committee identified one action item: develop recommendations for a community event to focus on African American Wealth. Next committee meeting is Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 10 am, to be held at the Mary L. Singleton Senior Center.
- **Health & Public Safety Committee -**
- **Program Committee** – Committee Chair Burgin thanked the Board members for their endless support of the Black History Month Celebration. At the February 26, 2025, Program Committee Meeting, the Committee reviewed the Black History Month Celebration, refined collaboration with the Arts and Culture Committee and discussed upcoming events. The Committee discussed a formal recognition ceremony in the City Hall Atrium to celebrate Juneteenth. The Committee would like to partner with Jax Melanin Market for a key opportunity to foster community engagement and collect community input which will inform future programming and policy recommendations.
- **Military & Veterans Affairs Committee (MAVAC)** – The Committee met March 5, 2025, and selected Errol White and Lee Brown as Co-Chairs. MAVAC will engage with the Veterans Service Organizations and various stakeholders to gain a greater understanding of the needs within the veterans community. Mr. Harrison Conyers, Director of Military Affairs and Veterans Department, provided an overview of what the department does, along with an update of programs and activities. The MAVAC will attend the Florida Air National Guards Friends (FANG) Open House on Saturday, September 13, 2025, to gain a better understanding of the local Armed Services mission and capabilities. The committee will bring a motion to the MAAAB for the MAVAC members (2), to join the Duval County Veterans Council, which currently serves as a liaison between veteran service organizations and the City of Jacksonville. Next Committee Meeting –to be determined.

It was properly moved and seconded that the Military & Affairs Committee meet quarterly and on their off months, attend outside veterans meetings.

8. New Business – None.

9. Unfinished Business –

- a) **By-Laws** – covered by Mr. Reingold.
- b) **Vacancies** – may need to revisit the roll off of staggered board terms.
- c) **Closed Sessions** – covered by Mr. Reingold.

10. Next Steps:

Dr. Ahmed will share dates of the MLK Breakfast meeting schedule.
MAAAB Program Committee can ensure there is representation at each meeting.

MAAAB Open Forum:

- Ms. Frazier asked how the Board's recommendations to the Mayor and City Council be acknowledged and will there be feedback on the recommendations?
- Mr. White wanted to know the timeframe to forward MAAAB recommendations to the Mayor and/or City Council?
- Place on the April Agenda for discussion: the process for making recommendations.
- Chair Darby reminded Board members that it is critical to use the Board's platform on behalf of the African American community related to their expressed needs and interests, and to raise those concerns to city officials to act on.

11. Public Comment:

- **Robert Fuller:** feels that instead of tearing down the Carter G. Woodson School, that it could be used to benefit the community.
- **Christie Bird:** expressed an interest in knowing more about the MLK Breakfast Planning Meetings.
- **Ronda Cummings:** wanted to know about the application process for the two Board vacancies.
- **Lisa Ransom, Neighborhood Services Manager:** Suggested that individual Board members may use their own social media platforms to promote Board activities, and that the City's Public Affairs Office only promotes official City of Jacksonville business.
- **Deborah Brill:** wanted to know about other City of Jacksonville Advisory Boards. She stated that she is an Arlington resident and wanted to become more involved.
- **Lisa Ransom:** informed Ms. Brill that there is a Citizens Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) in her community, and to call her office, (904) 255-8250 for additional information on her local CPAC.
- **Lakia Spain:** reported that she has a small business and applied for a city grant in 6/24. The funds were to be distributed through LISC; however, the city and LISC are at an impasse and she was informed that no funds would be distributed, without an explanation. She would like to know what happens next?
- **Dr. Sondra Evans, FSCJ Dean of Natural Sciences:** attended the February Economy and Infrastructure Committee meeting and is interested in serving on the MAAAB. She also thanked the Board for the progress made in such a short period of time.

12. Adjournment: It was properly moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.

The next meeting of the Mayor's African American Advisory Board is Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. Location: 214 N. Hogan Street, First Floor Hearing Room #1002.