

Mayor's African American Advisory Board

Wednesday, August 13, 2025

9:30 a.m.

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

Meeting Attendance: MAAAB Chair Barbara Darby; MAAAB Vice Chair Ronetta Wards; MAAAB Secretary Kelly Frazier; Audrieanna Burgin; Dawn Curling; Latrina Dowdell; Kiara Nixon; Errol White and Menelik Vereen.

Excused: None. **Absent:** Lee Brown, III.

Staff and Elected Officials: Patricia McCollough, Special Assistant to the Mayor on Civic Engagement and Youth Participation; Edwina Henry, Neighborhood Services and MAAAB Coordinator.

Guests: Monique Stewart; Conrad Jennings; Trey Ford, St. Johns Riverkeeper; Nicole S., Florida Fish Pepper Co.

Meeting Summary

1. **Call to Order and Verify Quorum** - Chair Darby called the meeting to order and verified that a quorum was present.
2. **A Moment of Centering** - Secretary Kelly Frazier read a Mexican quote: "They tried to bury us but didn't know we were seeds." Ms. Frazier stated that in working for the community, "let your impact be undeniable."
3. **Approval of Agenda** – The August 13, 2025, meeting agenda was approved.
4. **Approval of Previous Meeting Summary** – The June 11, 2025, meeting summary was approved with noted corrections.
5. **Presenter** – None.
6. **Mayor's Staff Updates:**
 - Ms. Patricia McCollough, Special Assistant to the Mayor on Civic Engagement and Youth Participation, gave the following updates:
 - Ms. McCollough urged the Board to pay attention to the city's budget process, in particular proposed cuts to programs which focus on health, homelessness, housing and the Jacksonville Journey Forward. Additionally, she suggested contacting Ms. Brittany Norris in the Mayor's Office for an abbreviated update on the programs targeted for budget cuts.
 - Pay attention to the Doge recommendations in the news regarding spending and understand the impact of the Board's recommendations
 - Ms. McCollough spoke about the City of Jacksonville's application for a U.S. Civil Rights Trail, submitted July 16, 2025. The initiative is expected to support

educational efforts and boost tourism. Youth researchers helped to identify 22 historic sites that were featured in the application. All applicants will be notified by the end of August regarding the status of their submission.

- Chair Darby asked if someone from the Mayor's Office could provide an overview of the budget process.
 - Ms. McCollough stated that City Council will hold a budget hearing on August 22, 2025; this is the last Finance Committee Meeting on the budget. The final vote on the budget will take place on September 23, 2025.
- Chair Darby urged MAAAB Members to attend the budget hearings.
- Ms. Nixon forwarded information from the City of Jacksonville's website on the remaining steps/meetings in the budget process for this year. Ms. Henry will forward the information to the full membership at the conclusion of today's meeting.
- Ms. Nixon wanted to know if the City Council has the authority to create legislation to stop advisory boards.
 - Ms. McCollough responded that the Board should pose that question to Mr. Dennis, as he oversees Boards and Commissions.
- Mr. White Noted that the Board still has one vacancy.
 - Ms. McCollough will speak with Mr. Dennis regarding the vacancy.

7. Public Comments & Announcements (three-minute time limit)

- Trey Ford – St. Johns Riverkeeper, asked the Board's support in helping to spread the word about "Oyster Gardens.: the riverkeeper is asking those with decks on the Ribault river to install the Oyster Gardens to help filter the water and keep the river clean and healthy.
- Monique Steward, Jacksonville Public Education Fund, announced that Dr. Darby will be recognized as the Nina Waters Quality Education For All Champion, at the September 23, 2025, ED Talks, at the Downtown Marriott from 11:30 am to 1 pm. For additional information, (904) 356-7757 or juana@jaxpef.org

8. Chair's Report – Chair Darby welcomed everyone back from the summer break and reported on the following:

- She met with Dr. Lynn Sherman on the Mayor's staff to share ideas about community outreach efforts. Dr. Sherman expressed an interest in attending the MAAAB's evening meeting in November.
- Dawn Curling pursued the question of whether the Board may participate in the Melanin Market and received a written response from the COJ Ethics Office, indicating that the Board could participate. The upcoming dates of the Market are: September 22, 2025, and November 29, 2025. The Chair would like to move ahead with what the Board has previously discussed: putting together a survey for public input.
- The Main Public Library is not available for the Board's evening meeting on November 12, 2025. Ms. Henry will look for another location and will notify the Board of the location.

- The Chair would like board Members to attend some of the community Town Hall Meetings that are offered around the city, to listen, share information and report back to the full board.
- She also suggested reaching out to faith leaders, CPACs, etc.
- Someone from the City's Public Affairs Office will make a presentation at the September 10, 2025, meeting. At that time the board can ask about making fliers, the process for getting them approved, so that they can be forwarded to the community.

9. Committee Reports

- **Arts and Culture Committee:** No report, no recommendations. Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 21, 2025, at the Main Public Library at 6 pm.
 - Dr. Darby interjected with Kudos to the Board for a fabulous Juneteenth Celebration.
 - Audrieanna Burgin was pleased with the crowd turnout and thanked everyone for their efforts in making the event such a success.
- **Economy and Infrastructure Committee:** The Committee met on June 2, 2025, at the Main Public Library. Gregory Grant, JSEB; John Everett, KHA; and Carrie Davis, Wealth Watchers, were the speakers.

The following are recommendations from the Committee:

- Expand support for minority-owned businesses navigating the JSEB process.
- Support increased funding for Youth Workforce Initiatives through corporate collaboration.
- Partner with civic organization to conduct an African American Quality of Life Study in Jacksonville.

Following discussion, recommendation #3 will be updated to reflect data collected from the new State of Jax data portal, which was launched on Tuesday, August 5, 2025.

- **Health and Public Safety Committee:** No report, no recommendations. Ms. Dowdell noted that she spoke with Dr. Lynn Sherman regarding effective approaches to getting information out to the community.
 - Ms. McCollough recommended contacting Charles Griggs, Jacksonville Journey regarding committee outreach.
- **Military and Veterans Affairs Committee:** The Committee gave the following report:
 - Mr. White will be attending a Veterans Council Meeting on Monday, August 18, 2025.
 - A meeting is scheduled with Harrison Conyers, Director of COJ Military and Veterans Affairs Department, for Monday, August 25, 2025.
 - The next Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at the Main Public Library at 6 pm.

- The Committee will review and revise, as appropriate, recommendations made previously, following the meeting with Director Conyers.
- **Program Committee:** Dr. Burgin stated that the Program Committee is on recess until October.
 - At the October Meeting, date to be determined, the committee will begin planning for the 2026 Black History Month Celebration, as well as discuss opportunities for synergy with other organizations and established events.

10. New Business:

- Birthday Wishes were extended to Kiara Nixon.
- Dr. Darby acknowledged Dr. Wards and conveyed condolences on behalf of the Board for the loss of her beloved father.

11. Unfinished Business:

- Dr. Darby is requesting an update on the Septic Tank Phase Out process. Ms. Henry will follow up.
- Dr. Darby asked members to respond to Ms. Henry as to which dates they will be available to attend some of the city's budget hearings.

12. Next Steps/Board's Open Forum:

- Ms. Nixon referenced Council member Rahman Johson's Neighborhood Bill of Rights Proposal. A copy of which was included in the Board Meeting Packet.
- Mr. White expressed concern over the proposed cuts to Veterans Affairs.
- Ms. Frazier reiterated the need to stay engaged and attend meetings out in the community.
- Mr. Menelik commented on the good work of each of the committees and stated that the Board's progress is evident.
- Chair Darby would like to reach out to Ms. McCollough on how the Board can make statements about its position on issues.
- Ms. McCollough recommended contacting Ms. Carla Miller, Special Advisor to Mayor Deegan, regarding messaging.

13. Meeting Adjourned at 10:55 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edwina Henry, Board Coordinator

Dr. Barbara Darby, Board Chair

Kelly Frazier, Board Secretary