

MEETING MINUTES: TRUTH Committee

Date: Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom/ GOB

1. Attendance

Members Present:

Amber Green, Chair (Virtual)

Carileigh Jones, Member

Caroline O'Hare, City Liaison

Joe Venosa, Member

Kenisha Le'Cole, Vice-Chair

Melissa Holland, City Council Representative

Meeting Summary

The Truth Committee meeting focused on updates and discussions regarding community engagement and partnerships. Amber facilitated the meeting virtually and began with the approval of the July meeting minutes. The committee discussed the open letter to the media, confirming its position as a community outreach document and noting the completion of the draft. The main topic was collaboration with the Chipman Cultural Center, where members brainstormed ways to support the center, including exploring grants, potential partnerships with city departments, and programming ideas. The committee debated whether to handle the Chipman project as a full committee or through a task force, ultimately deciding to appoint a liaison at the next meeting. New business included a discussion on the Wicomico County Nursing Home situation, with members considering how the committee could provide input or support, particularly regarding community voice and equity. Announcements were made about upcoming back-to-school events and community initiatives.

Local Media Outreach

The committee discussed an open letter to the media that was previously drafted and positioned as a community outreach letter rather than an official city advisory role. The draft letter is complete and ready for distribution, with plans to invite additional organizations like other advisory committees and the NAACP to endorse it. The committee also decided to establish regular communications with local media, with Sophia working on a contact list for local media outlets.

Chipman Cultural Center Collaboration Discussion

Amber provided an update on the collaboration with the Chipman Cultural Center, noting that preliminary engagement has been established with invitations to attend each other's meetings. She requested the advisory group develop a specific project or solution before further

engagement, suggesting research and groundwork be completed first. It was mentioned that previous discussions included the center needing assistance with grant writing, and suggested exploring the Maryland Heritage Area Authority and Maryland Humanities Council as potential funding sources, with grants potentially ranging up to \$100,000 for revitalization projects.

The group discussed potential grant opportunities for the Chipman Cultural Center, including SHINE grants up to \$10,000 for humanities programs and a historic preservation capital grant program through Maryland Historical Trust with a million-dollar funding opportunity opening in February. They identified that the city already maintains community gardens in the area and has a stake in the surrounding park space, suggesting opportunities for collaboration with city departments like Housing and Community Development and ABCD. The discussion revealed that the city currently lacks a dedicated grant administrator, which presents a challenge for securing external funding, as each department handles its own grant writing and reporting.

The group discussed strategies to increase awareness and utilization of the Chipman Cultural Center, including hosting meetings and programming there to showcase its capabilities. They explored potential partnerships with the Salisbury Cultural Museum for film festivals, local arts committees for art shows, and SU for cultural events like a pan-Africanism class. Amber noted the need to consider the building's historical aspects and discussed the challenge of finding a grants administrator, as the city currently lacks this capacity.

The committee agreed to appoint one committee member as the point of contact with the Chipman Cultural Center while also building a broader task force over time. Amber announced that at the next meeting, they would appoint an interim liaison role, with interested committee members asked to email their interest and plans for the role.

Wicomico Nursing Home Meeting Planning

The group discussed the upcoming community meeting about the Wicomico Nursing Home on the 31st, where concerns have been raised about deteriorating conditions and workplace issues. Members explained the complex history of the nursing home, which was taken over by the county after desegregation and currently lacks a clear authority structure between the county council and executive branch. The group identified a potential role for the Truth Committee in representing racial and social equity concerns, with Kenisha noting her appointment to the Human Rights Advisory Committee could make her a suitable representative for both committees.

The Truth Committee discussed their role in addressing concerns about Wicomico County Nursing Home restructuring, focusing on community voice and protections in the proposed oversight structure. The committee agreed to gather demographic data about residents and employees, and compile information and data before their next meeting. They decided to schedule a special meeting for September 2nd to review the data and draft recommendations for the mayor, aiming to provide him with talking points for an upcoming community meeting on September 16th.

Community Updates

- Back to School Event at Dover Dale Park August 29th

Next Steps

- Amber to Appoint a liaison/point person for the Chipman Cultural Center project at the next meeting.
- Amber to Reach out to Ms. Betsy Green for the exact date of the Chipman Cultural Center's board meeting and update the committee.
- Melissa to Share the draft of the open letter to the media with the City Council.
- **Committee Members:** Email the group expressing interest in being the liaison for the Chipman Cultural Center project, including a plan to jumpstart the relationship
- **Committee Members:** Attend the Wicomico County Nursing Home community forum on August 31st.
- **Committee Members:** Collect and share relevant data regarding the Wicomico County Nursing Home issue via email.
- **Committee:** Hold a special meeting on September 2nd to review data and draft recommendations regarding the Wicomico County Nursing Home issue.