Governor's Commission on Caribbean Affairs

Strategic Planning Session (SPS-II) Meeting

Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, February 19, 2026
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance:

Ken Alce, Member
Dr. Melissa Buckley, Member
Jemima Davis, Member
Samantha Howard, Vice Chair
Dr. Maxine Kellman, Member
Winsome Leslie, Member
Cylia Lowe, Member
Ambassador Luis McSween, Chair
Dr. Carla Sewer, Member
Kasandra Tucker, Member

Commissioners Absent:

Anderson Jean, Member
Gabriel Christian, Member
Habacuc Petion, Member
Dr. Elaine Simon, Member

GOCI Staff:
Maria Martinez, Special Secretary
Silvia Decja, Administrative Director
Cheryl Madigan, Executive Assistant

I. Call to Order:
Luis McSween, Chair – Meeting called to order at 6:09 p.m.

II. Prayer:
Commissioner Jemima Davis – graced us with a prayer.

III. Opening Remarks:

- *Chair Ambassador Luis McSween* welcomed everyone and thanked the commission for their leadership with their work on the committees and working groups.
- *Administrative Director, Silvia Decja* is excited to see what the commission will bring for the event planning activities this year, which will include a MD 250 Celebration.

IV. Motions: Approval of Minutes:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Approval of the 01/22/2026 Minutes	**Dr. Melissa Buckley**	**Dr. Maxine Kellman**	**8Y-0N-0A**

V. Committees:

a) Business & Economic Development - *Commissioner Ken Alce*

- Commissioner Alce informed the commission that the committee held its first meeting on 02/09/26. They agreed to establish an annual Caribbean Roundtable/Conference to be held in the fourth quarter of 2026. Second initiative is to develop and maintain a directory of Caribbean-

owned businesses and their third initiative are to build stronger participation and partnerships with organizations that are already active. They will be submitting a recommendation for Vice Chair position to the Chair. AD Decja recommends the commissioners need to check with State Ethics when they want to work with organizations. This will eliminate any conflict of interest.

b) Community (Arts-Culture-Faith) - *Commissioner Jemima Davis*

- Commissioner Davis will be setting up a meeting with this committee next week. She would like the committee to align their projects with the Governor's priorities. There is a possibility to collaborate with the University of MD. Other ideas she presented were Caribbean Heritage Month Reception, Dialogue Series with the Faith base communities (Meeting of the Minds), and a Showcase on Arts and Culture. She will provide more precise details after the committee meets.

c) Education & Workforce Development - *Commissioner Gabriel Christian*

- Commissioner Christian was not present to present an update.

d) Health - *Commissioner Dr. Melissa Buckley*

- Commissioner Buckley update is listed under Working Groups for the Maryland Caribbean Voices Forum.

VI. Working Groups:

a) Maryland Caribbean Voices Forum: *Commissioner Dr. Melissa Buckley*

- Commissioner Melissa Buckley stated that this event will be May 2, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. till 12:00 p.m. at GOCI's Crownsville office building. The panelists still need to be confirmed. They are interested in inviting student leaders from student unions from the University of Maryland and Coppin State University. The panelist questions have been revised. Commissioner Carla Sewer will see if there is representation from University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES).

b) Maryland 250 Commission: This can be festival, celebration or parade or a project.

i. Multi-culture Event – AD Decja informed that this event will include other GOCI commissions and GOCI's Office on Immigrant Affairs. There will be a chance that the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture will join this collaboration. The event could include food, performances, and poetry, etc. Funding will be required for this event.

Motions: To accept the invitation to participate in the MD 250 Multi-Cultural Event:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
To accept the invitation to participate in the MD 250 Multi-Cultural Event	**Cylia Lowe**	**Dr. Melissa Buckley**	**9Y-0N-1A**

ii. Maryland State Archives – Vice Chair Samantha Howard presented the proposal for this project. This project would consist of the MD State Archives which will record interviews on the commissioner's life stories. You may also provide photos or any documentation, and these interviews will be stored on the MD State Archives website. When everything is completed, there can be a launch event for the public. Funding would be necessary for the public launch. There is a list of questions, but they need to be approved by GOCI.

Motions: To accept the invitation to participate with MD State Archives (Oral Interview) for an MD 250 Project:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
To accept the invitation to participate with MD State Archives (Oral Interview) for an MD 250 Project	**Samantha Howard**	**Ken Alce**	**9Y-0N-0A**

VII. New Business:

- **Caribbean Connection Night (UMD-Caribbean Students Association)**
- Chair Luis McSween and AD Silvia Decja spoke about a meeting that was with a representative from UMD-Caribbean Students Association. They will be having a career night which focuses on students that want to launch careers in STEM and public health. It will be a professional development event with panelists. They have invited the Commission to join this event as a panelist or just as a supporter to collaborate with everyone. The event will be April 23, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. till 7:00 p.m.

Motions: To accept the invitation to participate with UMD-Caribbean Students Association for the Caribbean Connection Night event:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
To accept the invitation to participate with UMD-Caribbean Students Association for the Caribbean Connection Night event.	**Cylia Lowe**	**Dr. Melissa Buckley**	**9Y-0N-0A**

VIII. Old Business:

- **By-laws Discussion:**
  This topic is still tabled. Waiting on the revised suggested version.

IX. Motions: Adjournment of the Meeting:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Adjournment of the meeting at 8:07 p.m.	**Chair Luis McSween**	**Carla Sewer**	**9Y-0N-0A**