



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

BRONZEVILLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

LASHAWNDR VERNON, CHAIR

Raynetta Hill, Vice-Chair

**Theresa Garrison, Anthony Smith, Baboonie Tatum, Rayhainio
Boynes, Terrence Moore, Sr.**

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Monday, March 18, 2024

9:00 AM

Virtual Meeting

This will be a virtual meeting conducted via GoToMeeting. Should you wish to join this meeting from your phone, tablet, or computer you may go to <https://meet.goto.com/759896109>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (872) 240-3311 and Access Code: 759-896-109.

1. Call to order.

Meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m.

2. Roll call.

Present 6 - Vernon, Boynes, Smith, Tatum, Hill and Moore,

Absent 1 - Garrison

3. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from January 22, 2024.

The previous meeting minutes from January 22, 2024 were approved without objection.

4. Bronzeville RFPs, listings, projects, programs, initiatives, events, grants, activities, plans, or other aspects for update, discussion, review, and/or approval.

a. Bronzeville Center for the Arts update

i. Destination Arts Museum (2312 N. MLK Dr.)

ii. Gallery 507 (507 W. North Ave.)

Appearing:

Deshea Agee, EMEM Group

Mutope Johnson, Bronzeville Center for the Arts

Mr. Agee and Johnson gave an update presentation on both items.

The gallery site was a blighted building purchased in 2021. The new building design and construction was completed through Quorum Architects and Jordan's Construction Services, respectively. Occupancy for the gallery was obtained March 1st this year. The building featured BCA office, art gallery, makers space, retail area, and outside parking lot. The outdoor vertical drop down banner was approved by the City Plan Commission and would be situated left of the overhead outdoor signage stating "Gallery 507", which was installed and would be backlit. Office furnishings and gallery equipment was being moved in. Opening and programming would start this Fall. The interior featured a front door reception area, slat wall views going upstairs, makers space, stackable chairs, pop-up roll away tables, and gallery view. The 2nd floor featured office and sit-stand desk units.

Recent BCA hires John Russick (Managing Director), Robyn Cherry (Administrative Communications Manager), and Darlene Reed (Controller). Position to be filled was a Chief Curator. All hires would focus on short and long-term operational goals. Next steps included training staff for visitor services, audio visual, and security systems; considering outside hires for building security, building and grounds cleaning service; organizing workflows for staff and gallery operations as a key focus; and begin implementation of gallery program schedule. BCA would be doing marketing and branding initiatives to reinforce its brand identity to create real connections via various social mediums.

The former DNR site (2312 N MLK Dr) was a 3.4 acre site being planned for a museum featuring African American art, Black Box Theater (flexible space), exhibitions, outdoor green space, and sustainable building features. Activities completed in 2023 included conducting community scoping sessions at America's Black Holocaust Museum, launching an online survey seeking input on the BCCA, canvassing at Juneteenth celebration in 2023 and at businesses on King Dr., defining museum design-build program and potential space allocations, and site/building pre-design activities. The top survey responses (totaling 184) concerning aspirations for the new BCA space included welcoming, inspiring, safe, and active followed closely by innovative, comfortable, and energizing. Other responses included educational, accessible and low to no cost for Halyard Park residents, all of the above, and hope for people to learn about Black art and artists from various time periods. Planned 2024 activities would include continued community engagement, online survey, informational/promotional booths at public events, site and building design concept commencement, and estimated completion by December 2027.

Chair Vernon had concerns about BCA's operations at the former DNR site. She questioned why the Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum was not given the opportunity to move there since there was initial community talk to give that site to them to showcase and preserve historic Black artifacts and photographs. She inquired about the lack of collaboration with them. She also was concerned about the composition of BCA's leadership being representative of the local Black community. She mentioned that she was not considered for an BCA leadership position despite her interest.

Mr. Agee replied. They have been intentional in the design, construction, and operation of these projects to be reflective of local Black and/or minority firms and/or the community. For the gallery the architecture team was reflective of persons of color and 55% of firms that built the building were of Black and/or minority firms. BCA seeks and acquires leadership reflecting Black local professionals with desired

museum experiences and diverse backgrounds. Examples included BCA Chair Kristen Hardy (Halyard Park resident), Vice-chair Della Wells (artist), Mutope Johnson, Robyn Cherry, Darlene Reed, and formerly Executive Director Robert Parker. John Russick was a great professional and would serve to put a plan in place for the museum and to find an Executive Director, which was vacant presently.

Mr. Johnson replied. Their goal was not to duplicate other African American or cultural museums. Their goal was to be purely an arts museum. There would be some cultural overlap. They did talk to Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum but no promises were made.

Mr. Agee provided context on the history of acquisition of the former DNR site. The State made available the building and site through a public RFP process only after the DNR had moved on from that building in 2022. Multiple offers were made including separate proposals made by the Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum and BCA. There was no combined or collaborated proposal between the two. The State accepted BCA's offer and proposal for \$1.6 million. BCA had also submitted proposal for the 6th and North Ave. site but withdrew that proposal to pursue the former DNR site after being awarded it. The former DNR site provided a much larger footprint to make maximal impact. BCA would bring a world class arts museum. There would be opportunity for inclusion or promotion of historic Black imagery and photographs.

Chair Vernon said that there was opportunity to create an ecosystem on Bronzeville Black arts and culture rather than have silos being created and that BCA should also take on that responsibility.

Members inquired about the makeup and breakdown of BCA's Board of Directors being Black, grand opening and square footage of the gallery, and why conversations broke down on collaboration between BCA and Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum.

Mr. Johnson and Agee replied. The BCA board was conscience of adding from the local community. Over 80% of their board were Black with the desired backgrounds and experiences that BCA needed to achieve their goals and mission, and they were looking to grow further. Total square footage was 4,100 including the basement and 3,100 for the gallery. Programming and opening would be Fall 2024. They were in the process of building staff, training, aligning volunteers, and asked for patience. They were also doing other things behind the scenes such as landscaping, audio/visual, signage, and technical elements. There is a disconnect between BCA and Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum on vision of the museum site. Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum should be part of Bronzeville's ecosystem. BCA would support Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum finding a place of their own in Bronzeville, and there should also be support from other entities as well.

Chair Vernon concurred to keep the conversation going about creating an ecosystem and supporting the Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum to find a space in Bronzeville.

b. Office building update (2220-44 N. MLK Dr.)

*Appearing:
Deshea Agee, EMEM Group*

Mr. Agee presented. EMEM Group purchased this property strip to relocate their offices into Bronzeville. They were in the process to improve the 2nd floor space. The properties contained residential spaces and several commercial spaces with several businesses operating, such as Jewels Caribbean Restaurant. They applied for Brew City Match funds and facade grants. They wanted to be located across from their development, invest in the area, be part of the Historic King Drive BID, and help uplift the community.

Chair Vernon gave congratulatory remarks and said that the properties were on an important historic corner and EMEM's addition was a win for the BID.

c. Bronzeville Creative Arts and Technology Hub update (6th and North Ave.)

This item was held and not discussed as being not ready. It would be rescheduled for the next meeting, barring any issues.

d. Department of City Development updates

i. Commercial Corridor

Member Moore, Sr. gave an update. There was a new grant for the 2628 N MLK property, which acquired a new tenant for a educational resource center. All Commercial Corridor grants have doubled to assist businesses in response to inflation and increased costs for entrepreneurs. Signage grant increased to \$5,000 from \$2,500; facade grant increased to \$10,000 from \$5,000; storefront activation grant increased to \$50,000 from \$25,000; and retail investment fund increased to \$150,000 from \$75,000.

ii. Real Estate

Appearing:

Matt Haessly, DCD Real Estate

Mr. Haessly, on behalf of Amy Turim, gave an update on the 2673 N. MLK property. The historic property was given a nice story on the news by Channel 58 on March 8, and the story included interviews of Ald. Coggs, BID Director Hill, and Historic Preservation Commission staff. The asking price for the property was reduced now to \$5,000 to garner buyer interest.

Chair Vernon said that she saw the press that was done, she believed much collaboration and significant creative support would be needed, and for there to be further conversation on moving the property forward.

e. Other

There was no other discussion.

5. Public comments and/or announcements.

Member Moore, Sr. said that out of \$250,000 in TID 48 funds, a balance of \$4,575.11 remained. \$245,424.80 was spent.

6. Next steps.

a. Agenda items for the next meeting.

Items to include the Bronzeville Creative Arts and Technology Hub update (6th and North Ave.), which was held. Remaining items to be determined.

b. Next meeting date and time (Mon., May 20, 2024 at 9 a.m.)

7. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

*Chris Lee, Staff Assistant
Council Records Section
City Clerk's Office*