



Governor's Commission on Caribbean Affairs
Strategic Planning Session (SPS-I) Meeting

Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, February 6, 2025
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance:

Dr. Melissa Buckley, Member
Samantha Howard, Member
Luis McSween, Member
Habacuc Petion, Member
Dr. Carla Sewer, Member
Elaine Simon, Member
Kasandra Tucker, Member
Curtis Ward, Chair

Commissioners Absent:

Gabriel Christian, Member

Guests: JoAnne Oport, John McKenzie, and Althea McKenzie

GOCI Staff: **Lawrence Walker, Executive Director - GOCI**
Gregory Yancey, Chief of Staff – GOCI
Keith Colston, Director of the Ethnic Commissions – GOCI
Kamal Essaheb, Direct of Immigrant Affairs & Special Advisor to the Governor
Cheryl Madigan, Executive Assistant - GOCI

I. Call to Order:

Ambassador Curtis Ward, Chair – Meeting called to order at 6:06 p.m.

II. Opening Remarks:

- ❖ Chair Curtis Ward welcomed everyone. He spoke about Black History Month.
- ❖ COS Gregory Yancey thanked Chair Ward for his acknowledgement of Black History Month, and he introduce GOCI's new Immigrant Affairs Director, Kamal Essaheb.
- ❖ Director Kamal Essaheb provided his work history and experience in the immigration field.

III. Presentation:

Secretary Paul Monteiro from the Department of Service Civic Innovations (DSCI) spoke about the Governor's signature program "The Maryland Core Service Option".

- ❖ Marlon Smith (Member of MCSO) provided his story and experience with the program.
- ❖ Patrick Sawyer (Partnerships & Recruitment Manager with DSCI) spoke about the application process for the program (<https://dsci.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>)
- ❖ COS Greg Yancey ask for literature and videos to share with the commission.



IV. Subcommittees:

- **Health:**
 - Commissioner Melissa Buckley spoke about the diverse needs that exist within the Caribbean communities.
- **Business/Economic Development:**
 - Commissioner Cassandra Tucker did not provide an update.
- **Education (Workforce Development):**
 - Commissioner Gabriel Christian was not present to report an update.
- **Community (Arts/Culture/Interfaith):**
 - Commissioner Luis McSween attended a social event at the Embassy of Jamaica, and the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago. He visited with the St. Kitt's and Nevis folks and the folks of the Organization of American States, which was not as a commissioner's capacity.
 - Commissioner Carla Sewer spoke about a Caribbean Book Give Away for children and families to be given out at the Baltimore Caribbean Festival.
 - Commissioner Habacuc Petion spoke about his concerns on ICE on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. COS Greg Yancey suggested contacting him personally about his concerns. If "Someone sees something - Say something." Please report these concerns to the Office of the Attorney General.

V. Executive Orders Discussion:

- ❖ COS Greg Yancey went over the new upcoming executive orders, which will make all the commissions a fifteen (15) member commission. There will be more clarification in the information that was on the previous orders.
- ❖ Director Larry Walker informed that they have streamlined for consistency for the ease of understanding across the commissions and the ease of operation. The commissioner's seats or terms of service are not affected by the new executive order.

VI. By-laws Discussion:

- ❖ COS Greg Yancey stated that GOCI has created a template, which is under review. Director Walker stated that GOCI will complete the template and send it to the second floor for approval. Once they receive approval, GOCI will send the template to the chairs of the commissions for their review and edits that they wish to make.

VII. Maryland 250 Commission:

- ❖ Director Keith Colston spoke about the 2026 Maryland 250 Anniversary Celebration. GOCI would like all commissions to take part in this celebration. There are grant opportunities. Here is the link to their website <https://mdtwofifty.maryland.gov/>.

VIII. Open Meetings Act:

- ❖ Director Colston briefly went over the Open Meetings Act. You can obtain this information by going to this website <https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPblTabPDF/OpenMeetingsAct.pdf>.
- ❖ Director Larry Walker stated that it is not typical to have the public speak at the commission meetings. The public can reach out directly to the commissioners for information.

IX. Motions: Adjourning of the Meeting:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Adjournment of meeting at 7:43 p.m.	VC Luis McSween	Habacuc Petion	6Y-0N-0A