



Governor's Commission on Caribbean Affairs

2nd Quarterly Commission Meeting

Virtual ZOOM

Thursday, July 10, 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
Ambassador Curtis Ward, Chair

Commissioners Absent:

Gabriel Christian, Member
Elaine Simon, Member
Kasandra Tucker, Member

Guests: Moye Stephenson, John McKenzie, Jennifer Clair Ferguson, Dr. Aurora McKenzie, Darrell Hogan, BreAnna Holmes, Nicole Burnett, Kemi Adetola, Cheryl Lammy Jean Junior Morisset

GOCI Staff: **Lawrence Walker, Executive Director - GOCI**
 Gregory Yancey, Chief of Staff – GOCI
 Keith Colston, Director of the Ethnic Commissions – GOCI
 Silvia Gomez Decja, Admin. Director - Governor's Commission on Caribbean Affairs (GOCI)
 Cheryl Madigan, Executive Assistant - GOCI

I. Call to Order:

Ambassador Curtis Ward, Chair – Meeting called to order at 6:13 p.m.

II. Opening Remarks:

- I. Chair Curtis Ward welcomed everyone. He went over policies and the agenda. Commissioner Melissa Buckley suggested going forward to add to the agenda "Adoption of the Agenda." This will require motion and vote.
- II. Executive Director Larry Walker addressed the Caribbean celebration for the month of August, which is Maryland's recognition for Caribbean Heritage Month. He has received a commitment from the Governor, but no date has been decided on. He plans to do a proclamation/presentation at the beginning of the month. Then there will be an event that includes the community. This will include entertainment and food. He has reached out to former Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam to be part of this event. She was the one that pushed legislation to pass August as Maryland's Caribbean Heritage Month. He would like Commissioners to create a 30 to 45 second video highlighting what Caribbean Heritage means to them. This will be placed on GOCI's social media. This will include videos from the commissioners and community leaders. GOCI will provide the commissioners with guidelines for the videos. The commission will bring ideas for the planning of the event. He will need an invitation list from the commissioners that include ambassadors, etc. Entertainment could include steel drums, other instruments and vocalist. Try getting a sponsor(s) for food. He would like the Commission to partner with other events that are happening. Chair Curtis Ward



would like the declaration to take place early in the month of August. Director Walker has asked for August 1st or 4th.

- III. Administrative Director, Silvia Gomez Decja thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She offered her assistance with the commission on the planning of the August event.

III. Motions: Approval of Minutes:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Approval of 05/29/25 minutes	VC Luis McSween	Melissa Buckley	5Y-0N-0A

III. Committees:

Chair Ward would like these committees not to be called subcommittees.

- ❖ **Health** – Commissioner Melissa Buckley did not have anything to report for this meeting.
- ❖ **Community (Arts/Culture/Interfaith)** – Vice Chair Luis McSween stated exploring partnership opportunities with Kicking Goals for a Change. He attended the Caribbean-American Interfaith Service, which Director Larry Walker, COS Greg Yancey and AD Silvia Decja from GOCI also attended. Chair Ward added that there were two citations presented to the church and to the pastor. VC McSween has volunteered on the planning of the DC Public Library event. Chair Ward and Director Walker also attend the Discovery of American History Month Declaration by county Executive Marc Elrich. The Jamaica Association of Maryland will have a celebration in Baltimore for the Jamaica 63rd Anniversary of Independence at the end of July. COS Greg Yancey announced the C and J Migrant Solutions event on Saturday, July 12th at 10:00 a.m.
- ❖ **Business/Economic Development** – Commissioner Kassandra Tucker provided a written report but was not present to present it. AD Silvia Decja presented it. The committee has not made formal progress. There has been schedule conflict with others. The committee will get back on track to carry out their goals.
- ❖ **Education (Workforce Development)** – Commissioner Gabriel Christian was not present to provide a report.

VII. Old Business

Chair Ward spoke about the Carnival/Caribbean Festival. Director Walker and AD Silvia Decja will attend this event and present a citation.

VII. New Business

- ❖ By-laws – Chair Ward asked for a discussion with COS Greg Yancey and AD Silvia Decja to go over the by-laws.
- ❖ Caribbean Heritage Month Celebration – this was discussed at the beginning of the meeting by Director Larry Walker.

VII. Public Announcements

There were concerns from the commission concerning the public able to ask questions, having townhall meetings, and support with leadership.

VIII. Motions: Adjourning of the Meeting:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Adjournment of meeting at 8:02 p.m.	Melissa Buckley	Samantha Howard	6Y-0N-0A