

**SUMMARY OF THE
MASONVILLE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING (MCAC)
May 5, 2026, 5:30 PM - Virtual Meeting**

Attendees:

Baltimore Bird Club: Joe Corcoran, Mike Hudson
Baltimore Office of Sustainability: Natalie Cohen
Chesapeake Bay Association: Frank Neighoff
Curtis Bay Community: Evelyn Hoon, Rodette Jones
Friends of Masonville Cove (FOMC): Asia Bright, Belinda Wimbush, Rafael Rayu, Ralinda Wimbush
Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF): Grace DeLuca
Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Darren Swift, Joseph Ross, Katrina Jones, Kelvin Moulden, Rachael Gilde
Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA): Huriyyah Ahmad, Melissa Bogdan, Moreshwar Kulkarni, Ning Zhou
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Dallas Henson, Matias Orrego
MCAC Chair: Anita Kestel
MCAC Facilitator: Dr. Mamie Parker
National Aquarium (NA): Greg Atkin
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Dr. Ela Sita Carpenter

Action Items:

- MPA will prepare thank you letters and acknowledgments to organizations that submitted letters of support for the Masonville Cove Connector.

1.0 Welcome & Review of Previous Action Items

**Dr. Mamie Parker, Facilitator
Anita Kestel, MCAC Chair**

All meeting materials can be found here: [MCAC Share Drive](#). The May 5, 2026, meeting of the Masonville Cove Citizens Advisory Committee (MCAC) began with the rescheduled dredged material containment facility (DMCF) tour before starting the hybrid meeting. MCAC Chair, Ms. Kestel, convened the meeting, followed by introductions led by Dr. Parker. Ms. Kestel later requested feedback and a motion to approve the March 3, 2026, MCAC meeting summary. The Committee accepted the summary as final. Action items from the March 2026 meeting were all ongoing or otherwise completed.

2.0 DMCF Tour Reflections

Dr. Mamie Parker, Facilitator

Following the DMCF tour, Dr. Parker invited attendees to share reflections on observations and to discuss how the committee and partners could better build public awareness of the work occurring at the Masonville DMCF. Participants shared that visiting the site in person was beneficial as it allowed them to fully appreciate the scale, engineering, and habitat features which are difficult to understand through slides and pictures alone. Ms. Rodette Jones and Ms. Belinda Wimbush noted that while committee members are accustomed to seeing DMCF photos and hearing technical updates during meetings, walking the site and viewing the work firsthand made the project more tangible. Attendees also noted that the tour highlighted different site features, including the mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) wall and the role of vegetation in site stabilization and habitat value. The group also discussed the wildlife that uses the site, particularly whether birds like Killdeer or other nesting species are utilizing the MSE wall or nearby areas. Dr. Carpenter noted that it was her first visit to the DMCF since the dike was raised to +30 feet, and she found it valuable to observe current bird activity and habitat conditions up close. Mr. Atkin shared that 17 bird species were observed during the tour.

Ms. Bogdan inquired about virtual viewing options for bird and wildlife activity at Masonville. Dr. Carpenter noted that Masonville Cove has bird observation data available through platforms such as eBird and iNaturalist, and that birding groups regularly visit the site. Wildlife cameras livestreaming eagle nests and other areas of the Cove are being updated and maintained, with repairs expected to be completed by next year. Dr. Parker concluded the reflection by noting that the committee's role as an advisory body includes continuing to encourage tours, helping the public understand what is occurring at Masonville Cove and the DMCF, and exploring whether virtual viewing or other visual interpretation tools could help broaden public awareness.

2.0 Office of Navigation, Innovation and Stewardship (NIS)

Darren Swift, MPA

Mr. Swift provided updates from the MPA Office of NIS with a focus on the Masonville DMCF and the Innovative Reuse and Beneficial Use (IRBU) program. Inflow from Tradeport Atlantic began on February 18, 2026, and was completed on March 19, 2026, with an estimated volume of approximately 394,188 cubic yards (cy); however, this total may be revised to approximately 350,000 cy pending completion of end-of-project survey calculations.

Mr. Swift explained that a key component of DMCF management is efficient dewatering in accordance with permit requirements, as this supports material consolidation and recovery of available capacity. However, meeting discharge requirements can become more challenging during certain times of year, as elevated nutrient levels may contribute to algal blooms. When blooms occur, discharge cannot proceed until water quality meets permit conditions.

Mr. Swift then reviewed progress on the Masonville DMCF +42' dike raising project. Construction bids were received on April 24, 2026, with Notice to Proceed anticipated in July 2026 and construction completion expected in December 2028. Mr. Swift noted that the adjacent Fairfield Marine Terminal stormwater drain project is expected to begin construction in October 2026.

As part of the +42' effort, MPA is coordinating innovative reuse opportunities, including finalizing stockpile designs and planning for hauling activities in summer 2026. Approximately 50,000 cy of innovative reuse material is expected to be brought to Masonville, with roughly 22,500 to 33,750 cy anticipated to be reused in the +42' dike raising effort and the remainder expected to be used in the Kurt Iron Slip.

Ms. Kestel and committee members asked questions regarding the +42' dike raising, including how many additional years of capacity the project would provide and why the work was divided into separate phases. Mr. Swift clarified that the +42' elevation is expected to provide approximately 15 years of additional capacity.

Members also discussed long-term site use following completion of filling and containment operations, including potential additional terminal or parking capacity associated with nearby Mercedes-Benz operations.

Mr. Swift next discussed the Colgate Creek dredging project as an important example of MPA evolving the IRBU program. The project involved mechanical dredging of approximately 140,000 cy of sediment from Colgate Creek between the Seagirt and Dundalk Marine Terminals. The work supported navigation and berth improvements, making it easier for vessels to dock and unload cargo. The Colgate Creek project

also marked the first time MPA used the direct into geotube, or DIG, process. Under this approach, dredged material is pumped directly into large geotextile tubes to dewater, rather than being placed directly into a DMCF. This method helps address capacity limitations while also preparing material for potential IRBU projects.

3.0 Masonville Cove Connector (MCC) Updates

Joseph Ross, MPA
Rachael Gilde, MPA

Mr. Ross and Ms. Gilde shared updates on the MCC project stating that after engaging community members, industry representatives, and site users to gather feedback, a final concept has been selected. The selected concept reflects an effort to balance varying priorities, needs, and constraints across different groups. The selected preferred alternative is Concept 8, a roadway concept with a 7-10-foot shared-use path and a 4-foot buffer, while otherwise maintaining the existing roadway configuration without a median. The concept was selected in part as it includes considerations for pedestrian crossings at lower volume access points, provides separation from dust generated by Vulcan Material operations, avoids relocation of overhead electric utilities, avoids retaining wall costs, stays within Baltimore City right of way, allows for a potential future bus stop at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center and requires only minor modifications to MDTA's new signal for a pedestrian crossing.

The updated MCC schedule reflects that stakeholder outreach, concept development, and preferred alternative selection are complete. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process began in July 2025 and is expected to continue through June 2028. The 30% design phase is scheduled from May through August 2026, followed by Baltimore City Developer Agreement review from August through November 2026. The 65% design phase is scheduled from December 2026 through May 2027, followed by another City review period from May through August 2027. Final design is projected from September 2027 through June 2028, followed by another City review from July through December 2028. The bid package is expected to be advertised from January through June 2029, with construction currently projected from August 2029 through March 2031. The project schedule is subject to City of Baltimore coordination and approvals, grant-related project reviews, and adjacent projects in the area.

Mr. Ross also reviewed funding opportunities. MPA has submitted an application for a third round of Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) funding, requesting \$3.8 million for construction under the fiscal year (FY) 2027–FY 2029 solicitation, with award announcements expected in spring or summer 2026. MPA also submitted a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant application requesting \$9.3 million for construction, with announcements expected no later than June 2026. The Maryland DOT Kim Lamphier Bikeways Network Program was also identified as a possible funding opportunity, with FY2027 applications open through May 31. Mr. Ross and Ms. Gilde also emphasized the opportunity for the MCAC to support the Masonville Cove Connector through the public process, asking the committee to consider what support for the project means to MCAC, how the committee can help shape the public narrative, and how MCAC might engage with project supporters. Organizations that submitted letters of support for the recently submitted grant applications include the USFWS, LCF, NA, National Park Service, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR): Office of Outdoor Recreation, and the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Initiative. Future project steps include moving the selected concept through 30% design, continuing community and industry outreach, reviewing and pursuing additional grant funding sources, and coordinating closely with MDTA, Baltimore City DOT, Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Baybrook Connector project team.

During discussion, Ms. Rodette Jones asked about the potential for a bus stop and inquired about the pedestrian infrastructure for a stoplight and whether MDTA or Baltimore City would be responsible for completing walk signals and associated components. The team clarified that once users cross the intersection, the area becomes Baltimore City ownership and maintenance responsibility, and detailed design and maintenance questions will be addressed through the Baltimore City review and developer agreement process. The team further explained that installing signal poles and underground infrastructure now helps avoid future pavement disturbance once the Connector is built.

Committee members concluded with discussion on how the MCC is a long awaited and necessary investment in safe, equitable access for Brooklyn and Curtis Bay residents, many of whom currently cannot safely walk, bike, or use reliable public transit to reach Masonville Cove without relying on shuttle service or private transportation. Members shared concerns about the timing of projects, highlighting that many community enhancements implemented by government agencies can occur over extended periods of time. Project team members acknowledged these concerns, and Ms. Katrina Jones shared project history, including that once Masonville Cove was open to the public, the MCC project was paused pending the completion of a Baltimore City sewer project. She further shared that MPA has worked to move projects forward based on lessons learned on the importance of engaging residents early, listening to community priorities, and ensuring that port-related infrastructure and economic activity can also produce meaningful community benefits. The MCC represents a continuation of the deeper commitment MPA has to reconnecting historically disinvested South Baltimore communities with a restored environmental resource located within the industrial and postindustrial landscape. Committee members shared appreciation for the additional historical information.

4.0 MDTA, I-895 Interchange Improvements **Ning Zhou, MDTA**

Mr. Zhou provided an update on the I-895 Interchange Improvements Project. The project limits include the I-895 interchange area around Frankfurst Ave. and Shell Rd. The project will complete MDTA's conversion of toll plaza to highway-speed all-electronic tolling, replace aging structures, and reconstruct roadway pavement near the former toll plaza. The project benefits include improving safety and reducing crashes, supporting regional economic growth through more efficient commuting and freight productivity, reducing congestion and emissions related air pollution for nearby Brooklyn and Curtis Bay communities, and will bring MDTA assets into a state of good repair.

The project will be delivered in three phases. Phase 1 included the construction of new toll gantries, which began in August 2024 and was completed in October 2025. Phase 2 will include the reconstruction of Frankfurst Ave and consolidation of I-895 southbound off-ramps. Phase 2 is currently in design, with construction anticipated to begin in fall or winter 2027 and continue through winter 2029. Phase 3 will include rehabilitation of the I-895, removal of remaining toll plaza infrastructure, replacement of bridges, roadway reconstruction, ramp removals, new or enhanced greenspace areas, and a reconfigured northbound I-895 on-ramp. Phase 3 is expected to begin in 2031 and conclude in 2033. The team noted that MDTA will likely return to MCAC with additional updates as construction approaches, particularly to support messaging, construction alerts, and community awareness.

Ms. Rodette Jones, Ms. Belinda Wimbush, and Ms. Hoon inquired about how the MDTA schedule aligns with the MCC project and whether the MCC is contingent on the completion of the full I-895 project to proceed. Mr. Zhou and Mr. Moulden clarified that the MCC construction schedule is currently projected for approximately 18 months beginning in late summer or early fall 2029, and that the MCC is not contingent on the completion of Phase 3 of the I-895 project, which is anticipated to occur in 2033. Advancement of MCC construction is more directly constrained by the Baltimore City DPW sewer line

project along Frankfurst Avenue, to avoid constructing MCC with later impacts by City utility work.

The group also discussed overlap between MDTA Phase 2 and the MCC schedule and noted the importance of continued coordination among MPA, MDTA, Baltimore City agencies, and related project stakeholders. Mr. Zhou also shared that project updates and status information are available on the [project website](#) and through the general MDTA website, including traffic images, a toll-free phone number at [800-851-1060](tel:800-851-1060), and a project-specific email address at 1895tollplaza@mdta.maryland.gov. Dr. Parker noted that this contact information should be included in the meeting summary, so committee members and community stakeholders know how to share thoughts or concerns. Mr. Zhou shared that MDTA will continue to keep the MCAC informed as the project advances.

5.0 Friends of Masonville Cove Updates

**Dr. Parker for Ralinda Wimbush, FOMC
Asia Bright, FOMC**

Dr. Parker shared the FOMC updates on behalf of Friends chair Ms. Ralinda Wimbush, who had to leave the meeting early. The FOMC has reached a major milestone in development, with state level nonprofit formation now complete through pro bono legal support, and federal filing steps are underway. FOMC is now an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This major milestone expands opportunities for funding, partnerships, and programming while strengthening the organization's long-term community impact.

Ms. Cohen clarified that additional federal paperwork, including the 1023 filing, is still in progress and that the group expects to open a bank account as part of the next phase. Dr. Parker highlighted the significance of this milestone, noting that the FOMC is believed to be the first Friends organization associated with an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership to reach this stage. Dr. Parker also recognized and thanked Ms. Cohen for her work as Secretary and Treasurer of the Friends board and her involvement in the administrative process. The FOMC board kickoff meeting is scheduled for May 11, 2026. The purpose of the meeting will be to align board members around current plans and forward strategy through integrated conversations centered on the strategic plan. The board is expected to identify a manageable number of top priorities rather than trying to pursue all possible activities at once.

The committee also welcomed Ms. Asia Bright as the new FOMC Coordinator. Ms. Bright introduced herself as being Baltimore born and raised, noting that the position aligns with her values, including her love for the city, her interest in community work, and her experience working with children. Dr. Parker welcomed her to the Masonville Cove family and explained that the coordinator position is supported through the \$200,000 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant awarded to support coordinator positions for both FOMC and Friends of Hart-Miller Island. Dr. Parker elaborated that the grant funds have been announced but are still moving through administrative processing. An additional grant application has been submitted for the next funding period, which could extend support from the first 18 months to a potential total of 36 months. Mr. Corcoran shared concerns related to Friends of Hart-Miller Island, noting that, because of limited MDNR presence on Hart-Miller Island, the island is effectively closed, and the Friends group may face challenges documenting grant-related activities. Mr. Corcoran noted that it was unclear whether the issue would affect Masonville Cove directly, but wanted to make the committee aware and expressed interest in future coordination between the FOMC and Friends of Hart-Miller Island, especially since many of the programs at Masonville Cove could be adapted for Hart-Miller Island if circumstances allow. Committee members recognized that this may be under the purview of MDNR operations and is not something directly managed by MPA, but the committee appreciated the update and the broader interest in collaboration.

6.0 Partnership Updates

National Aquarium Updates

Greg Atkin, NA

Mr. Atkin shared updates on recent and upcoming National Aquarium (NA) programs and community engagement efforts.

- Over the previous three months, NA supported a Maryland Climate Crew Network event at Masonville Cove involving up to seven workforce development organizations from Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and surrounding areas. Participants completed a shoreline cleanup and removed approximately 500 pounds of debris with a small group of about 15 people. The event also included networking with MES and MPA staff to help participants learn more about conservation, restoration, and career pathways.
- The recent City Nature Challenge documented 12,890 individual observations across Baltimore City and Baltimore County. The challenge included 1,816 identified species and 768 observers. Examples of the most observed species were shared by category, including garlic mustard for plants, Eastern gray squirrel for mammals, American robin for birds, Eastern tent caterpillar moth for insects, green frog for amphibians, pond slider for reptiles, green sunfish for fish, and common green shield lichen and dryad's saddle mushroom for lichens and fungi.
- A recent workshop with NA's long-term partner Templo de Alabanza y Restauración noting that while the workshop went well, the event overall did not go as planned due to community safety challenges but emphasized that, because of preparedness and the strong relationship built with the organization over many years, the challenges did not result in a negative outcome.
- Looking ahead, NA will host a professional development program at Masonville Cove for South Baltimore program teachers and staff. Approximately 16 teachers and staff from the South Baltimore area are expected to participate. The program will focus on supporting educators, helping them avoid burnout, and preparing them for challenges they face throughout the school year.
- Latino Conservation Day will be held in August, hosted at the Maryland Zoo. The Maryland Zoo has not previously hosted a group of this size and in this format, making the partnership for the event a new opportunity to celebrate the community's conservation work in a safe and welcoming space.
- Participants are invited to attend a Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) meeting on May 28, 2026 at Filbert Street Garden. CBT is a large regional nonprofit that provides significant grant funding and supports environmental work throughout the Chesapeake Bay region.

Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF)

Grace Deluca, LCF

LCF has continued to implement SLURRP, the fully grant funded Students Learning Urban Runoff Reduction Program. Through SLURRP, LCF educators visit classrooms twice to provide hands-on learning about storm drains, runoff, and watersheds, followed by a field trip to Masonville Cove. The program is currently serving fourth and fifth grade students from six elementary schools, including Baybrook, Maree G. Farring, Curtis Bay, and Lakeland. The nature play space has become a valuable addition to the site from an education perspective. Students have enjoyed using the space during nature walks, and it provides a helpful way to incorporate movement, exploration, and informal play into structured programming.

In addition to SLURRP programming, LCF continues to offer fee-for-service field trips and outreach visits. Ms. DeLuca reported that from the meeting date through the end of the school year, LCF had a field trip or outreach session scheduled every school day, excluding Sundays, which was described as an exciting and positive challenge for the group. LCF is also continuing monthly outreach to local recreation

centers and has used the winter months to develop lesson plans and prepare for summer programming with Maree G. Farring students.

Mr. Orrego asked about outreach with local recreation centers and requested an update on the BEES summer program. Ms. DeLuca explained that the Baltimore Environmental Education Superheroes (BEES) program, a summer program that combines hands-on scientific exploration, literacy support to help maintain reading progress, social emotional learning, and enrichment activities, is still moving forward, although the program did not receive funding through its typical source. LCF determined that the program is important enough to continue and is exploring other grant opportunities and sponsorships to determine the scale at which it can be implemented.

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service

Dr. Ela-Sita Carpenter, USFWS

Spring bird banding occurs Thursday through Saturday mornings from March through June. Committee members were invited to visit the station if possible. More than 300 individuals from over 30 species have been captured so far during the spring 2026 season, including species such as the American Pipit, Worm-eating Warbler, and an older Northern Rough-winged Swallow. Broader bird banding results were also shared. In fall 2025, the Masonville Cove bird banding station captured 838 birds representing 56 species, including five new species. The total for 2025 was 1,341 birds from 72 species. As of the May 2026 MCAC meeting, the spring 2026 -to-date bird banding effort had documented 317 birds from 33 species, including three new species, and 47 individual recaptures. The busiest day was September 27, and 210 visitors were engaged through the banding station. These continue to reflect the continued importance of Masonville Cove as a bird monitoring, migration, and education site.

Dr. Carpenter also highlighted a new monarch migration poster developed in collaboration with the National Aquarium, Johns Hopkins University Scientific Illustration student Ms. Katherine Correa, the National Wildlife Federation, and MES was highlighted. The draft poster is intended to connect monarch migration to urban conservation by showing city landscapes and emphasizing that wildlife conservation can occur in urban areas, including places like Masonville Cove. The team is working toward printing final posters for use in outreach and education.

Dr. Carpenter shared footage from recent trail camera monitoring conducted for the Mammals of Masonville Cove program. Cameras placed near the pond and other active wildlife areas documented familiar species such as a domestic cat, red fox, raccoons, white tailed deer, and Virginia opossum. The cameras also captured several turkeys, and associated species interactions after one was preyed upon by a coyote. In addition to the camera footage, possible evidence of beaver activity was reported near the pier, where a tree showed signs consistent with beaver chewing. A trail camera has been placed in the area to determine whether the beaver returns or whether it was a one-time visit.

At least two eaglets have been observed in the nest and appear to be doing well. The eaglets are expected to fledge by early June, and the restricted side of campus is anticipated to reopen by mid-June if conditions allow. Looking ahead, USFWS will continue spring bird banding and related public engagement opportunities, with additional programming planned throughout the summer and fall. Upcoming items

include a bat walk at Filbert Street Garden on May 7, the WildSTEM internship from June through August, and Urban Wildlife Conservation Day on September 19.

Maryland Port Administration

Dr. Parker & Mr. Swift for Danielle Fisher, MPA

Dr. Parker and Mr. Swift shared MPA outreach and engagement updates on Ms. Fisher's behalf. MPA's outreach work continues to emphasize stewardship, education, access, and workforce development as key parts of the DMMP. MPA highlighted communications tools such as the iMPAct Report series, the Spotlight video series on dredging, the growth of Friends groups at Masonville Cove and Hart-Miller Island, and Get the Scoop on Dredging outreach events. These efforts are designed to help a diverse group of local stakeholders better understand MPA's work and connect local communities to the benefits and impacts of port-related environmental stewardship.

6.0 Adjournment

The meeting concluded with no final questions or comments raised, and Dr. Parker reminded members that the next MCAC meetings are scheduled for August 4, 2026 (*date later changed due to conflict with National Night Out*). Ms. Kestel then formally adjourned the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.