



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION COMMISSION

Wednesday January 22, 2025

The meeting began at 5:02 pm

Commission Members (in-person unless noted): Aniah Fountain, Gloria Howell (zoom), Lily Kleinlein, Julie Roberts, James Sanders, Angel Thornsberry, Latonya Wilson **Staff:** Michelle Moss **Associates and Guests:** Andrew Shannon, Director, COB Safe and Civil Cities

Introductions: Andrew Shannon from the Safe and Civil Cities department was present, so we shared introductions.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes not reviewed or approved for November or December 2024. Will need to review and approve Nov/Dec. 2024 + Jan 2025 in the February meeting.

Staff Liaison Report: Michelle thanked everyone for their efforts in putting together a successful MLK Celebration this year. The invoices for all costs (programs, keynote, performers) are in the process of being submitted today. New sponsorships came in from Monroe Co. CASA, the Friends Quaker Meeting and Wendy Bernstein.

Old Business:

A. **MLK Celebration Wrap Up:** We shared thoughts on the event. Angel felt that the event ran smoothly and messaging was consistent throughout. Latonya enjoyed it as a first-time attendee and looks forward to next year. Julie said she really enjoyed attending the IU MLK Day Breakfast. Lily appreciated that the event was a little more concise and meaningful with less elected official/representative remarks and liked that the invited officials who did speak also had a secondary role (announcing award winner, keynote introduction). Gloria loved the nod to the arts with the performers and thought they did an amazing job. Gloria agreed that the decision to hold up more meaningful remarks was a good one, even though it may not have been popular with entities who were accustomed to speaking. Gloria also thanked Julie for help with transporting Keith. She said that she's been in contact with him and he was really pleased with Bloomington's hospitality and had a great experience overall. He plans to come back to work with the Black Film Archives. James was pleased with the event but wished there had been more people at the film screening on Sunday, noting that he really enjoyed the opportunity to hear from Keith after watching.

New Business:

A. **Remembrance Week Planning:** Michelle said that we will need to get the ball rolling early if we would like to do something this year to commemorate April 4 (Friday). The February meeting is the final opportunity to decide on plans. Last fall we discussed inviting Sandra Chapman (*Girl with the Yellow Scarf*) to continue our theme of telling stories. Gloria suggested that Resilience Productions might be interested in doing a performance piece, which would also align with local storytelling. Julie said that Liz Mitchell is working on a new documentary which will be aired at the library on Tuesday March 4. Michelle said that we could incorporate some of the work that went into the 2023 Walking Tour (tour of Near West Side and Downtown that included many notable Black Historical sites, with arts and storytelling), and create an online resource/narration that community members could use as a self-guided tour.

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Latonya and Aniah suggested we consider something that would involve children since that was one piece was missing from our January event this year. The schools can be difficult to get into, and Julie said that lots of groups suggest art contests or writing contests run through teachers, and often they don't have time. Michelle said that the library could be an excellent partner/location, even something that could utilize our existing youth reading lists like a reading contest. James liked the idea of working with kids but strongly preferred that it be educational but also fun. He noted that many of the ways we involve kids in our city are more like homework (essays, art, reading, contests that involve prep work) and he'd like to see something a kid would really want to attend for fun. He said he participated in an event with the Boys and Girls Club in which they had stations of games, food, martial arts, crafts, the fire department even led some activities. Julie suggested something musical that could incorporate the Fairview Drummers. James said that Dr. King once gave a speech on "Fun Town" about explaining racism and segregation to his daughter, and we discussed tying this in somehow. We decided that the kids' event may not work for April 4 but could be done later in the spring or as part of the Juneteenth Celebration. James, Julie, Latonya, and Aniah agreed to meet as a subcommittee to work on this youth-focused project.

Michelle summarized that we may be looking to have something more serious in tone on April 4 for Remembrance, and then a secondary event later in the spring/summer for kids and families that is focused on fun. Michelle will reach out to Liz about Remembrance Day, and will send an email sharing that there will be a subcommittee to plan something for kids. Other ideas for Remembrance Day should be emailed or brought to the February meeting.

- B. **2026 Birthday Celebration Planning:** Andrew Shannon suggested we bring a member of the King family to one of our future events, noting that he has worked with them numerous times in the past. This would require early planning as they often book out years in advance. There are several family members who are part of the King Center and enjoy traveling to share their family's story. He said typically on MLK Day the closest family members are busy in Atlanta but could visit a different day. Andrew said that depending on who you ask to bring, honorariums run between \$5,000-30,000 but he might be able to negotiate a lower rate with his connections (unlikely to be less than \$15k+ lodging +travel + security). He says when someone from the King family is coming to speak, it becomes quite easy to garner community partners, sponsors, and in-kind donations. If interested, we should first reach out to him and then apply formally through the King Center website. Latonya asked if we would be allowed to focus on Coretta Scott King in 2026, as her role in the history of the movement is important and often untold. Michelle said that who and what we focus on is completely up to the commission, but it may not be possible to move the event to a different day or a different venue (as in utilizing an IU facility for a big-name speaker). Anyone with ideas for 2026 should bring them to the February meeting. Ideally we are looking to have all January 2026 planning done by late October, so that there are no lingering planning details going into the holidays.
- C. **One Community Curriculum:** Jess Davis contacted Michelle to say she's been continuing to add to the curriculum and wondered if the commission would like to take this back on in 2025. Michelle suggested that we work through MCPL since MCCSC wasn't very receptive, but taking this project on would require more commissioner involvement and time volunteering to deliver the curriculum. Will be discussed further at the February meeting.

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- D. **New Secretary:** Lily is leaving the commission at the end of her term so that another community member may have the opportunity to serve. There will need to be a new Secretary beginning in February. Julie nominated Angel to be the 2025 Secretary, Aniah seconded. Angel accepted the nomination, no questions were asked, and all voted yes. Congrats to Angel!

Public Comments (non-MLK Commissioners): None

NAACP Update: Julie said that they will vote on officers at the next meeting, with a new slate expected for 2025.

Commission on the Status of Black Males Update: James shared that since the last meeting the Commission held the popular Winter Wonderland Holiday event and last week participated in the 812 Podcast to talk about the commission's work (available online). They are looking forward to many new and returning events in 2025.

Announcements:

James thanked Lily for her many years of service as Secretary of the Commission. Lily said she will really miss working on the commission, having served as a volunteer or Commissioner for well over a decade.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Upcoming Meetings:

February 26, 6-7 pm, City Hall Kelly Conference Room (RM #155)

March 26, 6-7 pm, City Hall Kelly Conference Room (RM #155)

April 23, 6-7 pm, City Hall Kelly Conference Room (RM #155)