

VA African American Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2025

Virtual Meeting

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

- **Facilitator:** Clarence Neely opened the meeting as participants joined.
 - **Note-taking:** Tori Mabry mentioned she might need to tag Emma Jensen for minutes if leaving early; Emma confirmed she would prepare a notes document.
 - **Recording:** Ernisha Hall (Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce) noted she would use a recorder to continue if switching devices.
 - Greetings exchanged between members, including Shannon Kendrick and Cheryl Ivey Green.
 - Discussion of the most recent document sent by Tori Mabry.
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2. Quorum & Meeting Procedures

- Quorum requirement confirmed at 11 members (Emma Jensen).
 - Members awaited additional participants, including Monica Jones.
 - Justin Bell (OAG) suggested proceeding with updates while waiting to meet quorum.
 - Discussion on the importance of meeting quorum for board business.
 - Clarification that Ernisha Hall was using an AI assistant for notes.
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3. Updates & Community Engagement Initiatives

- **Social Media Initiatives:** Tori Mabry emphasized the board's commitment to new social media platforms to enhance community engagement. Shannon Kendrick expressed excitement about this renewed focus.
 - **Day of Service:** Scheduled for October 9th; members to provide activity ideas by month's end. Potential activities include a diaper drive and school-based community engagement.
 - **Shift in Reporting Approach:** Tori proposed prioritizing community visibility and active participation over traditional academic reporting. Shannon Kendrick sought clarification, confirming committee breakouts would focus on hands-on involvement with local agencies and schools.
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4. Attendance Concerns & Bylaw Clarifications

- Concerns were raised by Devin Mooney regarding meeting locations—often in Northern Virginia—posing challenges for members from other regions.

- Tori Mabry acknowledged the need for equitable statewide representation and recognized the logistical challenges.
 - Keren Dongo sought clarification on the attendance bylaw, and Justin Bell (OAG) confirmed virtual attendance is permitted if members live more than 60 miles from Richmond.
 - Correction proposed to previous minutes: bylaws were **not** voted on. Vote to occur at the next meeting when the Chair is present.
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5. Committee Breakout Discussions & Technical Issues

- Tori Mabry led committee breakout assignments, explaining the goal of focusing on actionable community engagement.
 - Princess Philomena Desmond-Ogugua noted her absence from previous meeting minutes; Tori assured this would be corrected.
 - Technical issues arose during breakout room transitions, with some members—including Princess—unable to join assigned rooms.
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6. Health & Community Issues Discussion

- **Funding Needs:** Tori Mabry and Clarence Neely stressed that securing funding is key to boosting community participation.
 - **Mental Health:** Princess Philomena identified mental health as a major concern in the Black community.
 - **Data Collection:** Shannon Kendrick emphasized the need for accurate data, while Tori noted that existing community health assessments could be leveraged for insight.
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7. Education & Business Community Engagement

- **Education:** Shannon Kendrick proposed surveying superintendents across the Commonwealth to assess challenges facing African American students. Interim updates may be provided to the incoming administration, with a comprehensive report due in 2026.
 - **Business Community Feedback:** Keren Dongo reported from a recent small business event that many attendees were unaware of the advisory board but were eager to connect. She announced an upcoming Fredericksburg event and offered complimentary tickets for board members.
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8. Criminal Justice Initiatives

- Bill Cleveland reported on arranging a meeting with a retired judge to discuss criminal justice issues.
 - Concerns were expressed about the limited committee time devoted to such a complex subject.
 - Tori encouraged committees to meet between full board sessions and offered assistance in accessing state agency data.
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9. Event Planning & Signature Series

- **February Event Proposal:** Ernisha Hall suggested hosting an in-person event in Richmond during Black History Month, potentially at the convention center, accommodating 150 attendees.
 - **Black Table Talk & Signature Series:**
 - Tori Mabry proposed an in-person Black Table Talk during Black History Month, supported by a virtual Signature Series in advance.
 - Shannon Kendrick recommended scheduling the virtual series during board meetings for better participation.
 - Cheryl Ivey Green suggested partnering with other boards to share ideas.
 - Dr. Daphne confirmed as a participant for the first virtual session in September; backup options to be prepared.
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10. Motion

- **Motion:** Shannon Kendrick moved that the advisory board begin planning a **virtual Signature Series** leading up to a **Black Table Talk event in February 2026** to formalize the board's commitment to community engagement.
 - **Seconded by:** Keren E. Charles Dongo.
 - **Outcome:** Motion carried.
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11. Future Meetings

- Next meeting scheduled for **October 9th at 10 a.m.**, with a focus on voting on bylaws and finalizing Day of Service plans.
 - Anticipation for upcoming Signature Series, Black Table Talk, and possible future event at the Governor's Mansion.
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Action Items

1. **Social Media Links** – Tori Mabry to send all links post-meeting.
 2. **Day of Service Ideas** – Members to submit by month's end.
 3. **Fredericksburg Event Address** – Keren Dongo to post in board chat.
 4. **Education Outreach** – Shannon Kendrick & DeVante to draft superintendent survey questions by next Friday.
 5. **Activity Tracking** – Tori Mabry to follow up on documentation for reporting.
 6. **Signature Series & Black Table Talk Planning** – Tori Mabry to coordinate, confirm Dr. Daphne's availability, and prepare backup options.
 7. **Event Promotion** – Tori to promote Bishop Willis's mental health gala on social media.
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Key Questions

- How will the board address challenges for members who cannot attend in person due to distance?
- How can representation from all Virginia regions be ensured?
- What are the most pressing health concerns in Virginia's Black community?
- What is the timeline for the next governor's report?
- What is the timeline for the virtual Signature Series leading up to Black Table Talk?