



Open session for the Black Baseball & Softball Community Heritage Project: Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: September 8, 2026, 7-8pm

Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Purpose: Community planning session for the Black Baseball & Softball Community Heritage project

12 attendees

Meeting summary:

Participants explored collaborating with the Josiah Henson Museum and Park to host an April series of events, potentially tied to Jackie Robinson Day, ideas discussed included: a panel discussion, family-focused activities, film screenings, recording booth, and other baseball-related programming. Discussion also focused on rebuilding youth interest in baseball through clinics, equipment access, mentorship, and community partnerships, particularly as part of the long-term vision for Johnson's Park as a center for youth development and community heritage.

Upcoming and next steps:

- **Next meeting: Tuesday, October 13, 7pm on Teams;** [meeting link](#) (call in #: [+1 443-961-1463,,821061111#](#));
 - **Topics:** Audience Focus will present audience survey analysis; discussion of results; planning for a youth focus group
 - **Key questions to mull in advance:**
 - Which youth audience and setting should we focus on?
 - Age - elementary, middle or high school?
 - Setting – school? after-school? leagues? other?
 - Which stakeholder group would provide the most valuable input through a focus group to help inform next steps for program planning for the target youth audience?
 - Coaches?
 - After-school program managers?

- Teachers?
 - Kids?
 - Do you have contacts that would be helpful in recruiting a set of individuals (10-15) for the focus group?
 - **Saturday, Oct. 24, 4-6pm** – in-person brainstorming charette at Josiah Henson Museum (11410 Old Georgetown Road); charette will focus on developing April public programs and potentially other longer-term interpretive ideas
 - I'd like to have a headcount for this charette for planning purposes. Please use [this form to sign up](#) to attend.
 - Consider and plan next steps of wider community outreach (ongoing)
 - potential development of a short project awareness/promotional video
 - investigate church-based and community-based opportunities, especially around priority fields/sites
-

Detailed Meeting Notes

Project Status

The project is at an exciting transition point from research and audience evaluation to planning public engagement and interpretation strategies. Survey results will help inform future interpretive programming and outreach strategies but will not be the sole basis for decision-making. Survey analysis will be shared at the October 13 meeting. Meanwhile, there are some public programming opportunities in partnership with the Josiah Henson Museum & Park that we would like to start talking through.

Josiah Henson Museum & Park (JHMP)

The site manager for JHMP provided an overview of the site and encouraged the baseball project team to view JHMP as a potential partner and resource. The site could support a variety of project-related activities, including public programs, charrettes, community meetings, and small fundraising events.

Site Mission:

Overview of the Josiah Henson Museum mission, described as a "three-legged table":

- Interpreting the life, challenges, and achievements of Josiah Henson.
- Educating the public about slavery in Maryland.
- Highlighting the ongoing struggle for racial equality and racial justice.
- While the first two areas do not directly align with the baseball initiative, the third mission area strongly connects to it. Black baseball history was described as an example of the continuing fight for racial equality and justice.

Site Amenities and Event Spaces:

- **Visitor Center:** Includes a flexible theater space that can host lectures, films, educational programs, and community gatherings. The theater seats up to 80 people and can accommodate screenings, including the museum's 12-minute introductory film.
- **Outdoor Terrace:** Located adjacent to the visitor center, the terrace overlooks the historic grounds and provides additional gathering space.
- **Museum Grounds:** Approximately four acres featuring walking trails and shaded open lawn areas suitable for outdoor programming and events. Recent uses have included performances such as a jazz concert.
- **Historic House:** Features permanent exhibitions and space that can support small-group activities, displays, and educational programming.

Potential public programs partnership

JHMP has two existing public programs that may align with the baseball project:

- **History Hour**
 - A monthly series for adults, usually either a lecture, presentation, or a panel.
 - Held in the theater.
 - Thursday evenings, usually from 6 -7pm.
- **Family Day**
 - Weekend day with more interactive programming geared towards children and families.
 - In the past JHMP has hosted a spring-time History of Play family day; the day focuses on looking at play by children in all types of difficult times, including enslavement.
 - As one participant noted, “play in the African American community has always been part of the sacred work of resistance for us...[baseball] was a place where we could come and play together, to be together in spite of, and in fact, because we were being suppressed every other place, we can do this together. And so, it's a wonderful idea. And to the extent that we can use park resources to celebrate that and to teach it to the generations that follow, I'm all for it.”
- The group discussed the possibility of giving these events a baseball theme for 2027.
 - Possibilities discussed included:
 - Planning a multi-day programming geared toward different audiences; History Hour on Thursday, April 15 (Jackie Robinson Day) for adults, Saturday family day for kids
 - Panel:
 - Could have a particular lens, such as the impact of players off the field.
 - Could include former players, family members of players, field owners, etc.

- Record the panel.
 - Typically, History Hours have a \$5 registration fee; JHMP would make this one free.
 - Could include brief video clips (see reference to Montgomery History 2021 conference session).
- Family Day
 - Include baseball/softball at nearby Cabin John.
 - Screenings, possibilities:
 - [2023 mini-doc by Historic Takoma about Lee Jordan](#)
 - Collect used sports equipment, could explore partnering with Level the Playing Field.
 - Recording booth – both specific to preservation of local baseball history but also people’s own stories about sports and play in their lives and communities.
 - Other yard games on grounds.
 - Temporary displays could include a map of the fields, photos, etc.
 - View uniforms, gloves, balls, etc. of prior eras.
- Access – the group discussed challenges in transportation for youth in some communities and ways that could be addressed.
 - Partner with other government and nonprofit entities who could provide transportation.
 - Could pick people up at central community sites like rec centers, schools, churches.
 - Street Outreach Network has vans that carry kids every day; could be a potential partner.

Other topics covered

- It would be worth trying to connect with James Wood, an all-star player for the Nats who is from Montgomery County and played in Olney. Participants shared a community contact.
- One participant had her mother’s 1950s Marylanders uniform recreated; she found a custom sewing service online; she’ll have it on display along with her father’s Scotland Eagles uniform at Scotland Rec Center for Black History Month.

Youth development through sports

The group discussed ways to get young people involved in baseball and softball. Some ideas mentioned include:

- Be consistent with programming.
- Get kids at an early age; t-ball, elementary school.
- Heritage Emory Grove (HEG) plans to use the field at Johnson’s for youth development through sports. In addition to sports, they imagine doing lessons on history, character,

and leadership development. HEG believes that the Rec Dept is key to connecting these pieces.

- Gene advised that starting with clinics at Johnson's rather than a new league may be a good way to start.
- Getting equipment will be key; Level the Playing Field is a local non-profit that collects and distributes gently used equipment; The Nationals have a program for providing jerseys and maybe equipment to youth teams, e.g. RBBA.

**NB – Microsoft Co-Pilot AI assisted with these meeting notes based on the meeting audio transcript; Parks staff then added to and edited the notes.*