



MONTGOMERY PARKS

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
2425 Reddie Drive | Wheaton, MD 20902
MontgomeryParks.org

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

Meeting Date: August 4, 2026, 7-8pm

Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

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

4 attendees

Next meeting: September 8, 7pm on Teams; [meeting link](#)

Meeting summary

The meeting focused on ongoing project planning, with particular emphasis on community engagement, youth outreach, focus groups, and future brainstorming and interpretation strategies. Participants discussed how the project's historical research is increasingly serving as a catalyst for broader conversations about youth sports/development, cultural heritage, and intergenerational engagement.

Detailed Meeting Notes

Survey and Audience Evaluation

- Initial results were shared at the July 14 meeting; generally, findings indicate low public awareness of the history, but high interest in learning more.
- A more detailed analysis will be completed by the evaluation contractor later in the fall. Results should be ready to share by early October.
- Survey results will help inform future interpretive programming and outreach strategies but will not be the sole basis for decision-making.

Youth engagement

Key questions - How might the project engage younger audiences in meaningful ways? Which subset of youth should we target for focus groups and eventual programming?

Key Observations

- Baseball teams often lack diversity, especially Black players on youth teams.

- Softball participation has been especially challenging to sustain in Montgomery County
- Youth sports participation patterns vary significantly by community
- Participants discussed the decline in baseball and softball participation and the need for creative approaches to reconnect youth with the sport.
- Sports history could be used as inspiration and entry point to participation in athletics

Focus group

- Identifying youth audiences for future focus group. Potential audiences:
 - Middle school students
 - Student athletes
 - Youth sports participants
 - Youth ministry groups
- Another idea – focus group with coaches and others in youth development
 - Engaging coaches may be more effective than trying to gather large groups of youth directly.
 - Coaches live and breathe youth development and can suggest ways to incorporate project materials into existing programs.
 - History can be used as a tool to strengthen participation and recruitment.
- Focus group content might include:
 - Testing educational and programmatic ideas
 - Exploring what types of programs would make this history meaningful and engaging
- Partnership opportunities
 - redevelopment and youth development initiatives in Emory Grove
 - through MCPS Athletic Director(s)

Project outreach and planning

Key question – how might we best share the project work so far, including survey findings, invite others to participate, and plan some brainstorming sessions for history interpretation?

Decentralized outreach

- Participants discussed sharing information through more distributed means, more predominantly in community spaces, rather than government spaces
- For example, church-based outreach was suggested
 - churches serve as key communication centers within African American communities
 - churches remain trusted community spaces
 - multi-generational audiences are available through church networks
- Suggested materials – short video like a project trailer; display boards
- Churches to share materials with could be those with relationships to project stakeholders and also those near priority fields/sites, such as:
 - Emory Grove UMC
 - People's Community Baptist Church

- Good Hope Union UMC
- Round Oak Missionary Baptist Church (Spencerville)
- *note – not a complete list
- Participants also discussed recreation centers, especially those co-located near priority sites/fields (e.g. Good Hope), as potential partners for info distribution, focus groups, and other pop-up engagements.

Brainstorming and interpretive planning

- Parks staff shared that one way to think about interpretive work is in three overlapping categories – commemorative (e.g. public art), didactic (e.g. signage), and programmatic (e.g. walking tour, living history programming).
- For youth development, the inclination is that something programmatic will be the sweet spot.
- Would like to start brainstorming to start in the fall. Parks invites input from the group for what that looks like. It is best to do this kind of work in-person. One idea is to start with a driving tour of priority fields, followed by an in-person brainstorming session(s).

Upcoming and next steps

- August 29 – Friends & Family Day at Johnson’s Park, hosted by Milt Thompson and Heritage Emory Grove
- Next meeting Tuesday, September 8 at 7-8pm; [meeting link](#)
- Consider and plan next steps of wider community outreach
 - potential development of a short project awareness/promotional video
 - investigate church-based and community-based opportunities, especially around priority fields/sites
 - plan first steps in interpretive brainstorming
- Consider and plan focus group around youth engagement
 - consider youth participants and/or coaches and youth development professionals
 - target to hold focus group before Thanksgiving
- Review detailed survey analysis when available in late September/early October

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