

STATE OF KANSAS)
WYANDOTTE COUNTY)) SS
CITY OF KANSAS CITY, KS)

SPECIAL SESSION, THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 2023

The Unified Government Commission of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, met in Special Session, Thursday, August 31, 2023, with eight members present: Bynum, Commissioner At-Large First District; Burroughs, Commissioner At-Large Second District; Townsend, Commissioner First District; McKiernan, Commissioner Second District (arrived at 5:10 p.m.); Johnson, Commissioner Fourth District; Markley, Commissioner Sixth District; Davis, Commissioner Eighth District; Garner, Mayor/CEO, presiding. Ramirez, Commissioner Third District; Kane, Commissioner Fifth District; and Stites, Commissioner Seventh District; were absent. The following officials were also in attendance: David Johnston, County Administrator; Alan Howze, Assistant County Administrator; Angela Lawson, Interim Chief Counsel; Monica Sparks, Deputy Unified Government Clerk; Reginald Lindsey, Budget Director; and LaVert Murray, Economic Development Advisor to the Mayor.

Mayor Garner said before I call the meeting to order I want to announce that we do have individuals attending remotely as well as on-site. All participants joining by phone, should please mute your phones when not speaking to avoid background noise. During the meeting, make sure you announce yourself by name and title every time you speak so the public that is participating knows exactly who is speaking. This is critical given the number of remote participants and is also current guidance from the Kansas Attorney General's Office. I would also like to remind, especially here on the 5th floor, that you please be sure to speak loudly and clearly into the microphone to ensure that your comments are being captured by the Clerk for an accurate record of the meeting.

Mayor Garner called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL: Markley, Davis, Bynum, Burroughs, Townsend, Johnson, Garner.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL SESSION of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, to be conducted in a hybrid format on Thursday, August 31, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. in

the Commission Chambers of the Municipal Office Building for a presentation regarding the Quindaro Ruins.

CONSENT TO MEETING of the governing body of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, accepting service of the foregoing notice, waiving all and any irregularities in such service and in such notice, and consent and agree that we, the governing body, shall meet at the time and place therein specified and for the purpose therein stated.

Mayor Garner said this evening we're going to have a presentation regarding the Quindaro Ruins. This is a real important meeting for our community. There's been talk for decades about moving the Quindaro Ruins from ruin into something really exceptionally great, not just for Wyandotte County and the State of Kansas, but for our entire nation. When you talk about the abolitionists, the Wyandotte Indians as well as other freed slaves that used the underground railroad to come to the free State of Kansas by way of the Quindaro Ruins, that is a significant site. One of the most recognized and significant sites for the underground railroad anywhere you can find in this nation. It is a valuable resource, as well as jewel, for Wyandotte County. Tonight we're going to discuss and kickoff a conversation and part of this conversation, I want people to always remember, even though we're starting the discussion tonight, the ultimate goal and the vision is for all of us to work together. Our staff here at the Unified Government, our Unified Government commissioners, as well as the people that call Wyandotte County home, to really reimagine, envision something great for the Quindaro Ruins to make it a first-class tourist attraction, a vision of having people from all over the world come to that location to educate themselves and to learn about the plight of freed slaves that came through Quindaro for freedom to the free state of Kansas by way of the underground railroad.

It is a site that needs to be stabilized. There's still artifacts there. There's a lot of history that emanates from that location, the Quindaro Ruins, that goes into the northeast area of Kansas City, Kansas and it could be, if it's done right, a positive economic driver for an area that has too long been disinvested, disenfranchised and redlined intentionally over decades here in Kansas City, Kansas. So, part of this presentation is to look at the Quindaro Ruins and, hopefully, you all can start imagining and reimagining what a positive vision for the northeast, and especially for the Quindaro Ruins, can be when you talk about revitalization, stabilization and something to where

effectively and essentially be the jewel, not for just Wyandotte County in the great state of Kansas, but for the entire nation.

At this time I'm going to turn it over to LaVert Murray, who's my Economic Development Advisor, who's been involved over the years with the Quindaro Ruins in a variety of capacities and he's going to lead tonight's conversation.

LaVert Murray, Economic Development Advisor to the Mayor, said this evening we wish to set the stage for meaningful dialogue and discussion about an area that is near and deep in the heart of many throughout our community and beyond. We are hopeful that through these discussions we can establish a reset and a reboot for the Quindaro Ruins and the Quindaro Ruins Archaeological Park Initiative. There are a number of documentaries tracing the history of Quindaro and later, not tonight, we hope to share with you all of those documentaries.

However, tonight we will call upon Mark Meisenheimer to show his documentary as part of the preamble of things to come. Mr. Meisenheimer recently showed his film in Washington, D.C. Immediately following, I will share the vision for Quindaro and have some brief discussion and introduce you to some of our stakeholders who will have comments as well. I want to make sure we acknowledge our Chief of the Wyandot Nation of Kansas who is with us today, Chief Judith Manthe and second Chief (inaudible) and I do know that Holly Zane would be with us tonight, but she is ill and so we appreciate her thinking about us and we have Chief Justice Karen Arnold Berger who's vitally involved in the Quindaro Ruins, Chief Justice of the Kansas Supreme Court. We have a number of dignitaries and stakeholders from Quindaro and we'll get into the introductions after the showing of the film and hear comments as well.

Mark Meisenheimer said thank you LaVert, I'll keep this short. I just wanted to thank you all, the Unified Government and the Mayor for the invitation and opportunity to screen the documentary film tonight. It's a great honor to be included in the conversation about this significant historic site as it gains the recognition it much deserves. Quindaro Ruins, a documentary film, was recently showcased at the FILMTEENTH Film Festival in Washington, D.C. over the Juneteenth Holiday and shortly afterwards the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Film Festival and just this week, due to our appearance at the Kansas City Film Fest International, an environmental group, learned about the film and is giving consideration

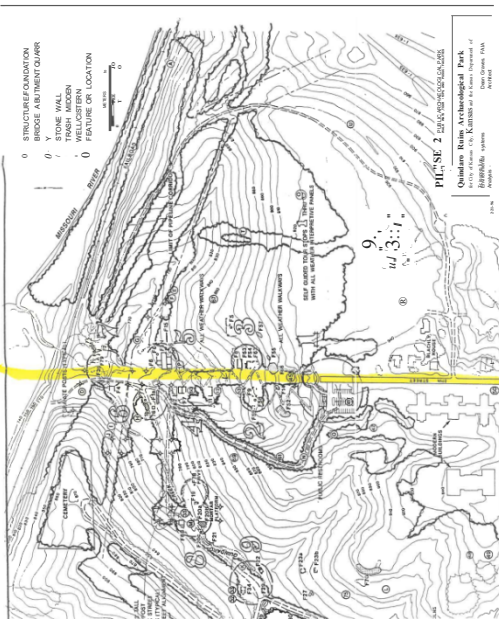
to screening it at their festival that focuses on the issues and history surrounding the Missouri River.

Our goal has never been to make money, but rather to generate awareness, inspire dialogue and provoke positive change. The film is a result of countless hours, sleepless nights and unwavering determination all fueled by the desire to contribute meaningfully to the recognition and preservation of the historic site, Quindaro.

The documentary film was shown.

Mr. Murray said now that we are filled with the history of Quindaro, it is vitally important that the Unified Government coordinate and collaborate with and establish dialogue with the residents and stakeholders in the Quindaro area to illuminate the needs of the area and establish a framework in which to bring about restoration and preservation of the ruins as we pursue a renaissance and revitalization of the area. The established and prevailing vision for the area will be presented tonight in a very simple, skeletal framework as we flesh our skeleton with the details of the short-term future while working with our community partners and stakeholders, many of whom are here tonight and have been working towards our end objective for years.

It has been noted of late that we are very close to achieving the National Historic Landmark Program designation for the Quindaro Ruins area, which is determination made by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. This designation is just one step below what everyone's objective should be for the Quindaro Ruins area and that is the designation of a National Historic Park or National Historic Site under the auspices of the National Park Service.



The Mayor and Commission have been presented with maps showing the Quindaro Ruins Archaeological Project area with some notations of property ownership. There is much more detail to be shared as it relates to property ownership and we have large maps and surveys showing that. However, for tonight or for tonight's discussion, I should note that 27th Street represents the boundary marker that separates the Unified Government property from the AME property.

If you look on the screen, the top part represents the eastern section or the Unified Government's land ownership and, of course, the bottom—I planned to have this map different, but that's fine, the bottom represents AME Church ownership.



Also, note that the majority of the currently designated historic district area, and it's hard to tell from this map because we reduced it, is on the Unified Government side of the property along with the Blakey house and the Vernon School and other sites. I should also note that the Old Quindaro Cemetery is under the Unified Government's ownership since the cemetery was acquired from the AME Church pursuant to the Abandoned Cemeteries Act.

On this map you can see—I should have had a better map. While time constraints tonight do not permit us to discuss a number of issues related to various parcels of property, I would ask that we not create any anxieties over those issues because there will be time for us to discuss and resolve issues. However, I believe it is important to note and acknowledge that as a part of our vision for the area, the reconstruction of the cemetery road and improvements to the cemetery must be one of the items at the top of our priority list for the Quindaro Ruins.

I'm certain that the members of the Vernon Center Board are happy today, after learning yesterday, and we have members of the Vernon Center here with us, after learning yesterday that their much sought after Section 106 clearance has been approved which puts them a great step closer to receiving their grant funding to make improvements to their facility and replacing the roof. I am also certain members of the Freedom Frontier Board and staff are equally happy. Additionally, Mr. Hope and his team is a step closer to receiving the much needed funding for repairs to the Old Quindaro Cemetery. We learned that here recently as well.

I personally am not a stranger to the Quindaro Ruins efforts and undertakings as I serve as one of the three managers under the Tri-Party Agreement to oversee the Saver Treasurers Grant Restoration and the Preservation Initiative. I see one of our members in attendance with us tonight, Steve Collins, who was another Tri-Party member. Our third Tri-Party member was Reverend E. Lewis Branch of the AME Church. Additionally, with the assistance of John E. Walden and Wilba Miller of my staff, at that time, we designed and built the overlook structure and the steps that takes you down to the ruins area. It was a labor of love for all of us, which included many of the stakeholders here tonight. It was also our agreement that placed the Quindaro artifacts in the hands of the State Historic Preservation Officer and office in Topeka for safekeeping and storage until an archival facility and museum could be built in the Quindaro area.

There are four parts to our vision for Quindaro which, and I already indicated, will be brief in sharing our vision. I am certain this vision will be added too. Additionally, there are many details in this vision that I won't try to flush out tonight, but our visions, as I said earlier, in four parts. One to restore and preserve the ruins structures. Vision Two, enhance and improve access to the ruins site through a connecting link to I-635 and earlier we had a Patty Banks Plan that showed how that could be done. Vision Three, to build a trail and signage system for the ruins in a period, correct manner, and for the trail with each ruins site having a computerized interactive sign system display with Holograms and talking features. We expect volunteers and employees from the Army Corps of Engineers and others to assist us particularly in trail efforts. Vision Four, build an archival building or a Smithsonian-style museum and visitor center that would house the Quindaro Ruins artifacts.

Much like the Save America's Treasures Grant Initiative, it is expected that the Unified Government be a lead agency in the community partnership arrangement to provide transparency, oversight, fiscal controls and accountability and audit review services in the Administration of Programs and Grant Management. Such a framework should allow us to start meeting to refine the vision and start implementing that vision immediately.

We will hear from some of our stakeholder members and friends tonight and, of course, we'll first hear from Chief Judith Manthe followed by Chief Justice Berger.

Chief Judith Manthe said this has been an important project. The Wyandot Nation of Kansas has worked hard to try to preserve Quindaro for many, many years. The Civil War is what totally

destroyed Quindaro. We were not really allowed to come back, we lost our land, we've lost everything, but we have always been there. We had an underground railroad going on in Ohio. We have continued the underground railroad here in Kansas. We have tried very hard to be stewards of the land and preserve what should be preserved. I am very onboard for anything that we can do to Quindaro to get it as the (inaudible) site.

Like I said in the film, Quindaro is a beautiful place. It needs cleaned up, it needs so much. It has so much potential there to tell the stories.

Lucinda Adams, Executive Director of the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, said you heard from my predecessor in the film and I will echo everything that Mr. Ogle said. The Quindaro Ruins are not just a Kansas City, Kansas or a Kansas treasure. It is a nationally significant site that must be preserved. My staff and I are working every day on helping with the National Historic Landmark legislation. In my opinion, that is the first thing that needs to happen and I think we are on our way to making that happen. Once that happens, we are then in a great place to receive federal funds for the project.

The vision that Mr. Murray has talked about, it actually is my vision for the site. I can see the economic impact that would happen to the community if this site were to become a national park site with a Smithsonian type museum exhibit and visitor center. The amount of tourists that would come into this area is—I'm not even sure how to count that figure, but with a multi almost \$100M project that this could be, it could really do great for the community. I also see this as a way for our children to learn about what has happened in the past.

My daughter is 13 years old, she's fortunate both of her parents are historians and so we teach her about those things in the past that nobody wants to talk about. I can see where this site could have every single student in Wyandotte County, Jackson County, Johnson County coming through to learn about the history of Quindaro, the history of the Native Americans, and the African Americans both and I think that's what is so unique about this site is the ability to learn about both sets of individuals and people that were part of the area. That doesn't happen a whole lot and even throughout the country. You know Freedom's Frontier is one of 62 National Heritage areas. We are the only National Heritage area that is on the Network to Freedom, so when I look at this site, I see it as something that will bring people from, even just not the United States, but from all over

the world that want to learn about the underground railroad and also the Native Americans that ended up in our area.

Mr. Murray said we now have Nikia Hope representing the Concerned Citizens of Quindaro and Anthony Hope and the Quindaro Museum.

Nikia Hope, Vice President for Concerned Citizens for Old Quindaro, said my perspective on the whole situation is a little different. I would like to consider myself what you would call an inheritor of the area. My family is from the town side of Old Quindaro. We've been there really since its inception. Robert Monroe, who was mentioned in the documentary, is one of my great-great-great grandparents and he's responsible for me being here today.

A few things that I wanted to mention to you all today, one, we were established, like the documentary talked about, in 1983 after the threat of the landfill to try to protect the area and preserve its history and we've been around ever since. One of our main goals is to preserve the area and the history of the area. One of the things that the documentary mainly focused on was the way that the area looks right now as it relates to cleanup. Being someone who lives in the area, who has always lived in the area, I'm 27 years old, I've seen it through its good times and not so good times. One thing that I can say is that we cannot expect others to respect the area if it doesn't look like we respect the area. I have taken countless pictures, recorded countless videos of dumping in the area. I drive through the area every day. I take my daughter to Quindaro Park almost every day during the summer time. I'm constantly reporting on the dumping in the area. My family is buried in the Old Quindaro Cemetery. My uncle, Jesse Hope III, who was the founder and curator for the Old Quindaro Museum in the early 2000s, around 2002, helped with refurbishing the cemetery and bringing it up to a decent standard, but we constantly see a general disrespect of the area by new community members. Some of it I venture to say is because they don't think the area is cared about because there's only so much that we can do. So, we have a very vested interest in the cleanup of the area.

I was just in the Old Quindaro Cemetery a couple weeks ago. I have myself had to pick up trash from in front of the gate to be able to drive my car to the cemetery. I, myself, have had to pick up huge branches out of the middle of the road that leads to the cemetery to be able to get my car to the cemetery. On Memorial Day as I was placing flowers on my great-grandparents,

there were community members riding dirt bikes through the cemetery and a lot of it is that you can't tell it's a cemetery until you get up there and see it's a cemetery. There's no signage at the front gate that will let you know it's a cemetery. There's no signage leading on the road that will let you know that it's a cemetery and a lot of the area, as the documentary showed, is unkept in that way. I think a great starting place for us to work on together is figuring out how to make that a little more of a priority, the upkeep of the area, and I'm interested in working with you all as well as the rest of the community to play my part in that because, like I said, I'm an inheritor of the land. I have a three-year old daughter and she's going to be next to inherit the land, so I want to better preserved for her as well.

Another thing that the Concerned Citizens for Old Quindaro focuses on is the Old Quindaro Museum, which is located at 3432 No. 29th St. in the area of Old Quindaro. That museum was established in late 2008, early 2009 by my Uncle Jesse Hope, III, who has passed away. He was the curator of the museum and we share a unique perspective in that we share stories of community members who have been there, those who have escaped slavery and created a life for themselves in the area. We house historic artifacts from community member from Western University. The house that the museum was located in was the first house in the area to have lights and cold and hot water. As Mr. Murray mentioned, we're one step closer to getting funding to restore the house. After my uncle passed in 2015, we didn't have the funding and the infrastructure to be able to do that. In this new season, we kind of got stopped with COVID, but in this new season we're working our way towards that.

We also hope to, as the Old Quindaro Museum, be a part of continued conversation because I think we share a unique perspective on the area. I think we share a unique history on the area. In our inception, we had people coming from as far as France to come to the museum and to take tours. Even last summer we did a family reunion of about 25 people on a walking tour to show them the area, so I think the history is still sought after. I think that people still want the information and I'm hoping that we can start better preserving the area, simple measures to better preserve the area, signage. I'm willing to start small and work our way up big, but we would like to be a part of those conversations seeing as how we have first level experience. We're there every day, we see it every day. We work a lot with the Wyandot Nations, that's like our family, so we've worked a lot together to try to help the area, and like I mentioned, we just want to continue to be a part of the conversation with you all and provide support. We want to help you all help us.

August 31, 2023

Mr. Murray said we'll have Steve Collins and Steve brought some material, Dr. Steve Collins, for the Commission did not bring enough copies, so we'll leave a copy with the Clerk and make sure we get copies made.

Steve Collins said I was a teacher at Kansas City, Kansas Community College. I was also a Project Director for the Quindaro Ruins Archaeological Park Project, one of the Tripartite Directors with Mr. Murray and also Rev. Branch. It's a pleasure to address you and I don't know where the Mayor went, but I talked with him before he was the Mayor at the Overlook at the Ruins and he told me if I'm elected, I'm going to do something about Quindaro and he has and he does and there's a great deal of hope I think now that just wasn't there.

I don't have a slide to show anyone, but I'll hold these up as I talk. First of all, the importance of Quindaro, I'm going to do this very quickly, the importance of the Quindaro Ruins is in its multicultural cooperation. In the middle of tremendous conflict with slave owning populations just across the river watching, there was this African American, Indigenous American and Caucasian American cooperation. It's important to remember that the Wyandot Nation of Kansas, then the Wyandot Tribe, were forced to come down and when they got here they brought with them a pre-adaptation to the underground railroad. They had an underground railroad in their Ohio reservation and they had a maroon community there, so when they came down here they had this system in place and the underground railroad and Quindaro began almost as soon, if not before, the town was even started, so they're very important. The county, by the way, is called Wyandotte County. I'd like to see it spelled Wyandot instead of the French usage.

According to the Hope family, at the time, Jesse had told me that there 13 families in Quindaro who had come through Quindaro running away from slavery and that they had returned after and represent the core of the Quindaro community now. These folks were courageous on their own. It's important to remember that slavery is something that the individual slave had to deal with and the individual slave made the decision to leave on his, on her own. The Harriet Tubman like raids, yes, they happened, but they were very small amounts, so the courage is in the slave himself. Once they got up to the Ohio River, and of course out here on the west, then the underground railroad helped considerably.

This map, which I'll just show you here, is the Leonhardt map and the Leonhardt map, this was the gentleman who fought for free state here in Kansas and in 1857-1858 he drew this

map. It's the only map that I'm aware of the Eastern Territorial Kansas underground railroad. It's a stunning and rare item and Quindaro is mentioned right up here along with John Walden who is the Editor of the Quindaro Chindowan. This is just an incredible document.

The first train of free state folks that came out from Boston to Kansas territory, I had as one of its members, Samuel Tappan, and after the underground railroad is operating for a bit, he finds that the funds are very much running out, so he writes a letter to Thomas Higginson who is one of the six who try to get John Brown out of prison, doesn't happen, but he tried. Well, the gentleman has supported the underground railroad in the past and they're asking for funds and I'm going to suggest to you that this one sentence in this document that you will get, this one sentence is extremely important. I think it's the most important sentence among the data for underground railroad in the state of Kansas. Let me just read it quickly. "I am happy to inform you that a certain railroad has been and is in full blast at Quindaro. Several persons have taken full advantage of it to visit their friends. Only one or two accidents have happened. Our funds in these hard times have nearly run out, and we need some help, for the present is attended with considerable expense." Here's the sentence, "If you know of any one desirous of helping the cause, just mention our case to him and ask him to communicate with Walter Oakley in Topeka, James Blood or myself in Lawrence or Sam C. Smith in Quindaro." This letter is nothing short of a blueprint of the bureaucratic structure of the organization, the underground railroad, in the Eastern Territorial Kansas. It's dramatic. It is something we should emphasize in the archival that is established.

Finally, and bear with me please, yes, there should be a trail system because it's wonderful to walk that trail system; however, we have a wonderful site that is very, very steep. I've traversed this 100 foot vertical drop up and down dozens and dozens of times. We need to make this site accessible. I would like to propose an aerial tram system that glides over the site providing bird's eye views that one usually does not get at an underground railroad site. Did you notice the drone from this gentleman's video, those are really interesting sites, you're floating. I can imagine people floating down to the first landing which is down at 5th & Kansas Avenue looking around, getting back on the tram going to the brewery, building, landing, looking around, then reboarding, going up to the cemetery landing and from there back to the top of the river bluff. When they get there, of course, there will be a six-story tall building sitting on the bluff with a restaurant on the very top, shops, all kinds of things you can buy. It'll be wonderful. Everybody gets rich and people get educated, so think about it.

We have nothing short of a world heritage site at Quindaro. Nothing short of a world heritage site. It seems completely reasonable, at the least, to work towards a National Park designation for the site. We need to show the world our gem as we celebrate freedom, equality and social justice in our history. Thank you Mayor Gardner and this committee for the important work that you're doing.

Mr. Murray said it has been requested that we hear Rev. Evans and we'll conclude with Marvin Robinson.

Rev. Stacy Evans said I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I just wanted to share some historical things that I think are important. I am the Chair of the Quindaro Town Site, Quindaro Ruins Town Site Project as well as the Chair for the Western University Association of the AME Church, so I am the representative of the AME Church and I wanted to share just a few things real quickly. For example, how the AME Church gets the property. There was a Presbyterian Minister who founded the Freedom School and then the school goes, it gets started and everything and the AME Church is right there lockstep with the Presbyterian Minister to develop the school. Later when this gentleman is elderly and about to pass, he wanted to pass on the property to the AME Church because the AME Church was instrumental in bringing African-American students to the school so when he dies he sees that the town is going down. He buys up large swath of it and then when he does die he gives it to the AME Church. Later on in 1881 the AME Church moves the property up to the top of the bluff and turns it into a very prominent HBCU historically Black college. The Western University is also a very prized possession of Wyandotte County and is still considered an HBCU to this day.

I want to say that National Treasurers Grant was a \$250K grant. These are easily provable with just a call to the Historical Society, National Parks and Historical Society. It was a \$250K grant that was granted, but it was a matching grant up to \$900K. As has been said already, Mr. Murray, Mr. Collins, and Mr. Branch signatures are all over it; however, it was never matched, so the million dollars, close to a million dollars, was never achieved even though everybody thought it should have been a walk in the park to match that grant at that time when they had received it. It was only \$250K, where did the money go? The money went to a few people whose signatures are on there, I believe, and then also it's very clear that a lot of the—most of the money,

the bulk of it, like \$150K or so, went to building the Overlook. So, there was no million dollars and there's never been \$5M. These are all easily provable by the UG I'm sure as well, National Parks and the Kansas Historical Society.

As far as the upkeep of the property, as a part of that grant that was received to build the overlook, there was a covenant agreement with the Unified Government to care for that property and the cemetery. I have gone back and asked the Kansas Historical Society to give me those agreements. To my understanding there is an agreement with the Unified Government that they will care for the cemetery. They were supposed to keep the brush off of the foundations, but it just never happened. Over the years, of course, it just grew back. Last year we cleared the property, did an awesome job of it and in just one summer it has really, really overgrown again, so it grows back very quickly, but again, very easily provable that the Unified Government signed a covenant agreement to help care for the property so it would not get back to the shape that it is in.

Now, having said all of that, the AME Church, the Quindaro Town Site Project is a very much collaborative organization. Over the years we have met with everyone, what I consider to be those stakeholders, since I've been a part of the project for now 14 years. The Western University Association Board has existed for about 50 years. A lot of people have passed away wishing and hoping that this project would take place and I feel like a lot of it is on my shoulders to make it happen. I'm very open to working with anybody who is interested in helping Quindaro to be everything that you've talked about tonight. A lot of it, in fact, sounds clipped right out of the paper from the interviews that I've done, so we're very interested in doing all of it. The Smithsonian like visitor center, the trails, the signs. We've done meetings in our basement with the Wyandot Nation, Marvin Robinson, the Old Quindaro Museum, the Vernon Center, Freedom's Frontier and we helped Freedom's Frontier to do that symposium along with all the other stakeholders here.

We're not interested in fighting or not being a part of anything. We want to be a part. I think what makes an issue is that the property is owned by the AME Church and as the lady said at the start of the video, Black people have learned not to just give up property. So, we want to work and do anything and everything that we can to be a part of the bringing together of Quindaro. I've heard tale of people saying we should turn the property over to National Parks or over to National this—I talked with National Parks, they've told me many times that you don't necessarily have to turn the property over. In fact, before we decided to do this MOU with the Unified

Government, we attempted to do it with the Kansas Historical Society and National Parks and they both said to me that we already have so many properties that we're not managing well, we really don't think we'll make a good partner and that's how we got into partnership with the Unified Government. The whole purpose of that MOU was to do something great, so that's why I'm here.

I'm here because I want to do something great, I want to work with the community. I was part of the master plan, all of those weeks going and listening and putting the dots and then Quindaro turned out to be the number one thing that people wanted to see happen. I know that it's the number one requested tour and last year nearly 1,000 people toured the site. We have cleared and cleaned it. You no longer have to go down those steep stairs. You can go around and we did punch it through so that you can walk through and it's much more accessible. So, those are the things that I wanted to share. Thank you and the AME Church was a part of the landfill, but so were others, but I'm not here to point fingers at any of that because I didn't have a dog in that fight. I've only been here the last 14 years and I want to make it happen along with everybody.

Mr. Murray said forgive me, I forgot we have Eleanor Jefferson representing the NBR for the northeast area. We'll hear from her and then we'll close with Marvin Robinson. I had Mr. Smith on earlier, but we've got just 10 minutes.

Eleanor Jefferson said I didn't realize that I was going to speak tonight, so it's going to be extemporaneous, but I'll do my best to make it clear. Just taking notes while I was here and I do appreciate what Rev. Stacy said about her 14 years because a lot was said, a lot was implied and they fell on shoulders. I that—it's not I think, I'm very comfortable with saying this is the only way that this project is going to take off and be representative of the history, which it deserves as well as everything else along the Kaw Point. One of the images of the visions that Jack Reardon had was to connect those types of tourist attractions is if we do two things. Number one, we do collaborate and that's a word that I have a definition, but I think we need to come to a bearing of what that actually means, actually to collaborate and also to trust because this is a big project, you know, a lot of parts to there.

A lot of people have various interests. We have our human interest as well as the interest of the tourism itself. I know for a fact that when the Quindaro Ruins, Kaw Point—and by which I would like to also, Mr. Murray, make in your notes that although we're talking about the

Quindaro Ruins, we're missing a key figure there at Kaw Point, which is York when we talk about Lewis and Clark and Sacagawea as well, so we have a lot to come together in order to build on and to get rid of the angst and the tragedies that the slavery brought to these shores.

I might also give a thanks to Mayor Garner as I have spoken with him several times about things like this and most recently about a Sister City. Some years ago, 12 or 13 years ago, before I co-founded the NBR, noticed there was not a Sister City in Africa. It just didn't happen for some reason, so if we're going to invest time and money into something like the Quindaro Ruins and other things like that, I think we need to take a broad look of what we represent here as a county and as a city. The Mayor has given me permission to go on with that Sister City idea in Africa and I'm going to pursue it with all the heart and passion that I have.

I thank you for listening and I thank the people who spent years of your life here with the Quindaro Ruins that have something invested in it, each and every one and I just hope that everyone can find his or her path by what you need out of the collaboration so that you get what you need—the other people get what they need and we're all successful.

Mr. Murray said next is Luther Smith, representing the Vernon Center and I believe he's a member of the Western University Board, Treasurer as well.

Luther Smith said I've been around Quindaro—well, I was born in Quindaro. I'm probably one of the older members around there now. I've seen Quindaro when it was a thriving place and then I seen it go downhill, but I want to see it come back. I'm a member of the Freedom Frontier Trustee Board and I'm also a member of the Western Association. I'm the Director of the Quindaro Underground Railroad Museum and I'm also on the Board for the Multi-Purpose Center at Vernon School. What I really like to push about Vernon School is it was named after a William Tecumseh Vernon, and at one time he was President of Western University. There's a lot of people that don't know that there was a university out in Quindaro, but it was the first Black university, west of Mississippi and you know it's a shame that all of that land is vacant now.

I'd like to see some big building put up over there to have all our archives and stuff. I'm a member of the Grigsby family and they came in from Liberty, MO around 1855 so our family knows a lot about Quindaro and we've done a lot for the area and we hope one day soon that everything—well, what I'd really like to see is like Vernon School to become the Business Bureau

of Quindaro and then I'd like to see the Quindaro area become like a national park. We can get that accomplished. I think that would really be something that would be good for Kansas City, Kansas and also for the state of Kansas and in the United States you might say.

I'm hoping we can keep things on the table and work together because if you don't negotiate, you're not going to get anything accomplished. It seems to me from some of the conversations I've heard, the thing that negotiations aren't going like they should. So, if we can get that working out over the table, things should go real good for us. I want to thank everyone for coming this evening and I always tell people when they come to the museum to tell their family and friends we're there. I've had people come in from all over the United States and some from foreign countries to see the museum and we really enjoy showing it and so come out when you can and that's it for this evening.

Mr. Murray said we'll close with Representative Marvin Robinson.

Representative Marvin Robinson said having had the opportunity to experience the legislature, I have even more profound appreciation for those of you in leadership than I used to, so thank you for doing what you do. There are so many things that were said tonight, but Dr. Robert Hoard with the—who's retired from the Kansas State Historical Society, every time we got a new Kansas State Historical Society archaeologists I would always call because the original archaeologist helped coach us on the importance of the site and help to get the Pompeii of Kansas identified because that's historical record. So, every time there was a switch, I used to always call even the Executive Director for the Kansas State Historical Society and I'd introduce myself and ask what do we need to do next and then I have been blessed to work with Nicodemus Historical Society people and I knew them from Emporia State University, some of the centers from there and Brown versus Topeka, we had our cultural heritage tourism component and we were sent to DC, Indianapolis, Boston for training. The Quindaro site is actually modeled off all the places that have all the accolades. Every so many years we tried to apply for more designations.

When this guy, Robert Hoard, was selected it was announced at some media place that we had a new Director, so I called and asked him—told him who I was, who I was with, what do we need to do. He was like he hadn't had a chance to turn around and find out anything. He's sitting right back there, so I kept calling two or three times, four or five times and then he finally

got to it. He said what you need to do is just quit making people upset and he did it a lot nicer because the site is destined for a National Historic Landmark. I don't know if you remember that or not and I tried to do that and then Kansas, a lot of stuff just doesn't work, it backfires, but we have more platforming than ever before with the National Historic Landmark at the verge of occurring and the goal ulterior motive is to use the site as a way to—I'm really nervous. I always get nervous and I shouldn't be—use the site as a way to synthesize, improve race, class and cultural relationships by employment opportunities for people who are chronically unemployed or under employed. Some people will never be a good employee because that just doesn't work, but they have so many skills that entrepreneurship development training opportunities so that the indigenous Aboriginal African-American community is allowed to be a part of that whole thing to boost individual and collective esteem to help reduce violence and crime and homicide. That's what I've tried to tell people forever.

But anyway, there's so many different things that I would like to try to share in being brief and respectful of the time because one thing I hate about the Unified Government when I used to watch some of the formatting on the screen is that your meetings take way too long. I feel for the staff and for the people that are having—it's anyway—what I wanted to say is archeology, archeology, archeology, archeology, the site is Pompeii of Kansas. It is archeology that drives the site. It is housed, registered placed in the National Register Historic places, only the Unified Government's portion is included in the National Register of Historic Places. The other people who have property, they can apply for the National Register of Historic Places, but we have gotten this far only on the 56 acres of the Unified Government's property for the National Register of Historic Places, a precursor, so archeology, archeology, archeology.

Several years ago we saw where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a veterans archaeological program. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a Veterans Archaeological Project where you contact them and they'll come in and sit down and focus on archaeological stabilization. Anything that happens with some of the great visions that were shared, it would require Section 106 and that could take 18 to 24 months for the Interior Department to weigh in even with the National Record of Historic places, but we were told that by the trainings at Boston in the Madam CJ Walker complex and the workshops in Washington, DC, so we're only following the regulations and the guideposts to make sure that this great, unduplicated, priceless resource has the opportunity for populations of American citizens to enjoy into the future. Again, I thank you.

Mr. Murray said thank you members of the Commission, Mayor, and County Administrator. We do plan to follow up with meetings with our stakeholders and we will coordinate as we move things forward and thank you to our audience.

Mayor Garner said thank you Mr. Murray and thank you to everyone that had a presentation. I don't want to let this opportunity for such a unique and profound topic that really has a lot of potential for something special for Wyandotte County get away without allowing any commissioners that would like to weigh in on the topic if you would like.

Commissioner Townsend said good evening to all who have attended here. I would like to acknowledge everyone who is currently a resident or trace their lineage back to the Quindaro Township to stand up. I see a lot of faces here. They may not have spoken tonight because this is a thriving community and I've tried to support them with revitalization of the nearby park there because I know this day is coming. I have to thank our Mayor for putting this on forefront. Certain things happen at a given time. I was actually born in Quindaro at the hospital and recall as a kid at Dunbar taking groceries there. That was our Thanksgiving. Can you imagine taking groceries to KU. In 1983 I was living in New Jersey and remember reading the *Kaw Newspaper* and it was filled with the efforts of people like the Hopes, Mr. Robinson, others I can call who were trying to salvage that historic area from becoming a dump site.

So, it's like a coming together, a revitalization. I'd like to recognize and thank the members and the Chief of the Wyandot Nation who are here. I recall meeting Chief Jan English and so I look forward to working with Chief Manthe and all the other members of the Wyandot Nation. Thank you Ms. Zane, Ms. Libby, forgive me if I've not called anybody else, but I'm so proud of my State Representative, thank you Mr. Robinson, and all who supported him.

So, Quindaro rise and as we move forward with this project, we've heard a lot of what was, but let's concentrate on going forward and what the word Quindaro means, stronger together, so rise up Quindaro. If you're a member of the Quindaro area, stand up. I would like to acknowledge your presence tonight.

Commissioner Markley said this is a wonderful presentation. My brother was in a high school class that did clean up on the site way back in the day. I feel really old now, but it didn't seem that

long ago, but I guess it was and it was a great experience for him and so I'd love to see it be an experience for more students as a site instead of a cleanup site going forward. This is clearly not in my district and a little bit outside of my stomping ground, so I was aware of the site and the history of the site. What I think I wasn't aware of that I think has sort of been referenced tonight is that it sounds like there are a lot of parties and interest here, which is awesome, but it sounds like those parties and interest maybe are not always on the same page and that puts a government in a really awkward position if you're preparing to come forward and ask for support because we don't want to have to pick and choose which party and interest we're going to give support to and risk offending those other interested parties who really want to help the site.

So, I guess I would just say to the extent, those different parties in interest can get together and come forward as a united front, that makes it a whole lot less awkward for us to have that conversation and I know those conversations might be awkward for all of you, but it really does put a government in a bad position if there are a bunch of interested parties and they are all coming forward looking for different kinds of support or looking for us to push forward their concept for the site, we need all of those people to be on one page.

Again, it's a little bit outside of my world. I wasn't aware that there were maybe those differing parties underlying this issue, but it's clear from this meeting tonight although the references were a little bit veiled, there are a lot of parties out there and that's awesome. We should capitalize on that. The means there are a lot of people that are interested in moving the site forward, but we need you to be together.

Commissioner Davis said I will be brief. To everybody that has presented, thank you all. This is very, very educational. I see some folks from our Urban Heights KC actually went on a hike through the ruins this past Monday and so I've got kind of a real, a good taste of what it really is like to go through it right now. Even being there, you are really going through what I would consider sacred ground where people have put their blood, sweat and tears into building something beautiful. I would love to see us come together and work and find a path forward.

I'm still fairly new to Wyandotte County. My district is further west and actually north of Commissioner Markley's district, but a good portion of my district is African American and actually I have a lot of constituents that are former residents of the northeast that moved and so I get asked about Quindaro more than you would think even though it's not necessarily my area. I

look forward to working with you Mayor and the commissioners, and all of the stakeholders, the AME Church, Western University. We have to figure this out. I think our kids, our children's children, are looking back and saying will we figure this out.

I look forward to compromise, I look forward to us being able to put something together that would be historic, not just for Wyandotte county, not just for the state of Kansas, but for our nation and for the world.

Mr. Garner said I'm going to allow our Administrator just to give a few word, some thought.

David Johnston, County Administrator, said just like our representative from NBR, I did not know I was talking, but as a new person to this area about five months now, it is amazing on the historic portfolio that is included within Wyandotte County. I think we all appreciate the stockyards, the railroads, the Lewis & Clark tie. We're just south of the Oregon Trail and the Pony Express. This is rich and then you hear about Quindaro and in a time where there is tension amongst people between ethnic groups and we can step back to the 1840s and 50s and see a community where people actually lived in harmony if I may be so bold. The Native Americans, the African Americans, Caucasians and I've heard also the Hispanics who called this place home way back when this was under a Spanish rule. It was quite a laboratory. Something that we should celebrate.

If we appreciate history, we can see a brighter future. We can appreciate the struggles of people who have come before us and rise above them for a brighter future for our children and grandchildren. We heard through all these presentations that we need to work together to get a common vision to make the place special, so this idea of using this forum as a start of collaboration for an important part of our history, our identity and our beacon to the future is imperative.

I look forward to being a part of that process and working with all of you to transcend your personal agenda toward a common community agenda. That's what's important. What's best for the community who are living today, who will live here tomorrow. What quite an honor to those who came before us and gave us this opportunity to celebrate. I also want to let you know probably about six weeks ago I was contacted by some people that may have funds to at least start something. When we talked to Congresswoman Davids and our U.S. Senators and even Congressman Cleaver across the river in Kansas City, they say they would love to help us, but we

have no vision, we have no master plan. They don't know what to fund, so it is imperative to come together and to use our energies and our common love for this area to create this special place and get it on paper so we can sell it and entice the public officials in Washington and in Topeka to help us out. So, we can talk, we can talk, we can talk, there's not going to be any fundings until we have something to show. So this collaboration has to go to something and that is what do we want this place to look like, what services do we want them to contribute to the community, and how do we make it special.

Again, there are people that I talk to that have wallets, but they're looking for the vision and as we heard from our state representative, the main message is we have to work together, have to have the common ground and if we don't do that, we're not going anywhere. Sorry to be so candid, but that's the truth. Let's use this as a rallying point to work together in short order to get that vision so then we can talk to other officials and get this to be a reality. Sorry I got a little passionate there, but I'm new, you can blame me for that. Let's work together to get this done. This is a special place, unique place.

When I managed Covington, Kentucky we were the end of a underground railroad. They just had to get to Cincinnati across the Ohio River, but we had homes along the river on both the Licking River and the Ohio River that had special hidden rooms in their basements that had tunnels to the shore of the river and we celebrated that because we were the gateway to freedom for so many people who were oppressed. What a special role. We have that here, but we had something more where you had people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, races that said you know what, living together we can create a great place to call home. So, let's use Mr. Murray's forum here as a springboard to do something wonderful.

Commissioner Townsend said a couple of acknowledgments I also wanted to make. Love movies, documentaries are so important, so I will not be remiss, did not want to be remiss in not acknowledging and thanking Mark Meisenheimer for his great work. Raise your hand up. I know equally important is the producer and I don't know if Mr. Smith is here tonight, but I thank him as well. Thank you Judge Martinez for coming and showing support and, of course, thank you to Chief Justice of the Kansas Court of Appeals, Judge Karen Berger, thank you for your attendance and involvement in this.

August 31, 2023

Mayor Garner said I would be remised—I know part of my job, really my role here at the Unified Government as your Mayor is to bring forth a vision and carry that vision of this Commission in trying to collaborate with them and convince them that it's the right vision for them to consider. There were a lot of people involved in this. Mr. Murray, I can't take full credit because I said, LaVert, we need to get Quindaro moving and he said give it to me, I got it and he's worked on it years before probably I even arrived to Kansas City. He did 40 years almost here at the Unified Government Economic Development Director and he's one of the key stakeholders in the current Overlook that's there. He's gathered a lot of information, he's worked with a lot of groups and gathered a lot of great wisdom in regards to the Quindaro Ruins and he put this together and he said I got it and he took it, so let's give LaVert Murray a round of applause.

It's his years of relationships that really allows him to bring a lot of seasoned people together that I may not have a relationship with as well as younger folks that we've seen tonight that also want to carry on the legacy and the significance of the Quindaro Ruins. One thing I can say is you've heard a lot about unity and coming together and that is something that really needs to happen with this project. The time for talk is over. We have got to move the Quindaro Ruins out of ruin. Can we agree on that?

Commissioner Townsend has already come up with a tagline and I think we need to adopt it and she said Quindaro rise and I think that is a good bright initiative to take on and let's look at Quindaro rise. Rising from the ruins into something really awesome for Wyandotte County. Now, I'm going to say it, because you've all watched over the course of the year since I've been Mayor, you know, we have not always agreed politically up here at the Unified Government. We've had strong heated debates right here, but what I can say is that I believe that every last one of these commissioners and our staff, we wouldn't be here today if we didn't care about Wyandotte County, but more importantly I can say that Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Townsend, and Commissioner Johnson came to the table and said, Mayor, what do we need to do, let's work together. Whatever political differences at this point doesn't matter. This is too big of something for Wyandotte County and it's bigger than all of us.

I've talked to Congressman Cleaver, Congressman Davids, I've talked to the Governor's Office, I've talked to Congressman LaTurner, I've talked to stakeholders, people with big wallets and our Administrators right, you have people that really want us to get our act together so they can invest and make this project not just a dream, but a reality and not a reality just for Wyandotte

County, but a reality that the entire nation can be proud of. Something that hopefully, if it's done right, with what you heard on some of the visioning and I'm not saying that's got to be that vision, that vision is just a thought because really it's going to take all of us and all of us really got to decide what is the best fit and outcome for Wyandotte County when we talk about the Quindaro Ruins. The ultimate vision is this can be a catalyst to really revitalize and reinvigorate an area that has been disinvested and bring life back to a community that has died, that should have never died. When you talk about freedom and hope and what that meant for so many people that crossed that river to freedom. We owe it to those people that risked their lives to make sure that their ancestors and this community upholds that plight, and that sacrifice, and that struggle that every human being has to just want to be free.

If you talk about and you look at the preamble we hold, these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, so no one should be left behind in Wyandotte County and you've heard about some of the challenges from Ms. Hope. The blight, decay, we can fix those things. I share what you've heard some of these commissioners say, let's come together as a community and set aside our differences and find a way to do something really great that the world can be proud of. That's my challenge as your Mayor.

Thank you for everybody that presented tonight. I don't want to miss anybody, so I'm not going to name anybody, but everybody that was here that contributed, every stakeholder, everybody that's worked here recently or throughout the years, even before me, thank you for your continued effort and for not losing hope and for being here today because you care, not just about the Quindaro Ruins, but you care about Wyandotte County, so thank you so much.

Mayor Garner said at this time I will adjourn this Special Session. Our staff is going to need at least 20 minutes to set up for the actual Commission meeting, so we will reconvene here at exactly 7:35 p.m. I apologize for the lateness.

Commissioner Bynum made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McKiernan, to adjourn.
Mayor Garner said we have a motion, we have a second to adjourn. Clerk, roll call please.

Roll call was taken and there were seven “Ayes,” Markley, Davis, Bynum, Burroughs, Townsend, McKiernan, Johnson.

MAYOR GARNER ADJOURNED
THE MEETING AT 7:25 p.m.

Monica Sparks
Deputy Unified Government Clerk

dt

August 31, 2023