Approved November 2, 2026

MINUTES OF THE
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION
Friday, September 18, 2026
(10490 Little Patuxent Pkwy, 1st floor Columbia, MD 21044)

Members:
Barbara Anderson
Scott Bailey
Rachel Brewster, Chair
Margaret Conn Himelfarb, Vice Chair
Christopher Dreisbach
Diane Hoffmann
David Mosser
Linda Powers
Alan Regenberg
Avram Reisner
Ira Schwartz, Vice Chair
David Valle

Staff:
Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF
Ben Antebi, MSCRF
Sabrina Spinner, MSCRF

Office of the Attorney General:
Jigita Patel

The Commission meeting was called to order at 10:16 a.m.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission reviewed the meeting minutes from July 13, 2026, Commission meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

II. MSCRF 20th Anniversary Felicitation - Update

The MSCRF 20th Anniversary Felicitation Ceremony is scheduled for September 30, 2026, at the UM BioPark's 4MLK building in Baltimore, MD. The event will feature remarks from distinguished dignitaries, keynote speakers, panel discussions, recognition of FY'26 awardees, and Crystal Awards honoring the recipients for their significant contributions to stem cell research.

III. Election of MSCRC Co-Vice Chair

Dr. Nijhara revisited the previous discussion regarding the appointment of a second Vice-Chair to serve alongside Comm. Margaret Conn-Himelfarb. Comm. Ira Schwartz was nominated for the position and recused himself from the discussion and vote, absenting himself from the room. A motion was made and seconded to appoint Comm. Schwartz as Co-Vice Chair. The motion was approved unanimously. Commissioner Schwartz rejoined the meeting and expressed his willingness to serve.

IV. MSCRC Working Groups: Delegation of Authority Discussion

The Commission discussed the scope of authority delegated to its temporary sub-committees and working groups, specifically whether they should have independent decision-making authority or only provide recommendations to the Commission for final decisions. Following discussion, there was a consensus that sub-committees and working groups would serve in an advisory capacity, and the final decision-authority will remain with the full Commission.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize MSCRC sub-committees and working groups to evaluate assigned matters and provide recommendations to the full Commission for the final decisions. Recommendations may also be approved by the full Commission electronically via email by means of unanimous consent. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Statement for Closing the Meeting

A motion was made and seconded that the Commission go into closed session. The motion stated the following:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE SESSION

General Provisions Article §3-108(a)(5):

A public body may meet in closed session ... to consider the investment of public funds.

General Provisions Article §3-108(a)(13):
A public body may meet in closed session ... to comply with a specific constitutional, statutory, or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter.

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:

The discussion will concern the implementation of the Commission's previously adopted criteria for grant funding. The Commission will discuss which applications to fund, given the scientific rankings and other relevant factors. The discussion will likely also relate to the characteristics of specific applications.

REASONS FOR CLOSING:

Paralleling the NIH process for considering funding of grant applications (as contemplated by its enabling legislation), the Commission believes that confidentiality is essential to protect the sensitive information about plans and processes that applicants divulge, to avoid a chilling effect on future submissions, and to enable the most candid Commission discussion of how best to invest limited resources.

General Provisions Article §3-103(a)(1)(i):

The Open Meetings Act does not apply to … a public body when it is carrying out … an administrative function.

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:

The discussion will concern a review of operational and related considerations impacting the administration of the MSCRF.

REASONS FOR CLOSING:

The Commission believes that the aforementioned administrative matters do not fall within the scope of coverage of the Open Meetings Act.

The motion passed unanimously. The Commission went into a closed session at **11:05 a.m.** The Commissioners, staff and legal counsel remained, although Ms. Patel departed the meeting at 2:30 pm.

TOPIC DISCUSSED

In the closed session, the Commission reviewed the scientific peer review ranking of, and key information about, the applications recommended for funding in all of the current categories of grant funding (Clinical, Launch, Validation, and Commercialization Applications). All applicant names and affiliated institutions were redacted. The Commission focused on applications that received competitive, meritorious scientific scores, giving priority to applications that included collaborations, regenerative medicine, translational research, and underfunded areas of research, after which it voted to approve the following awards for funding.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

RFA Type	**Recommended Awards**	**Total**
Launch	9	$3,084,250.00
Commercialization	1	$399,575.00
Validation	5	$1,349,999.00
Total	**15**	**$4,833,824.00**

TOPIC DISCUSSED:

At approximately 2:30 pm the Commission then discussed various administrative matters related to MSCRF's operations, including the potential hiring of an additional employee to staff the MSCRF.

ACTION TAKEN:

The Commission unanimously approved a Motion to authorize its Hiring Committee to recommend the recruitment of a potential new hire and bring them to the full Commission for further consideration and possible approval.

Meeting adjourned from Closed Session at 3:51 p.m. without reopening.