CITY OF CAMBRIDGE | American Freedmen Commission
Equity & Inclusion Department

Meeting Date:
Oct 20th, 2026 Time: 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Moment to Remember - "This Day in Justice" Calendar

Anchor in the Ordinance - *The Cambridge American Freedmen Commission shall work with the City Manager and/or their assistants, including the Chief of Equity and Inclusion, and other Departments to implement Transitional Justice for Cambridge Resident American Freedmen. The Commission will investigate and report on the historical, systemic and ongoing harms done to American Freedmen by the State (Federal, Massachusetts and Cambridge governments), and identify adequate, effective and prompt reparations.*

Present

In-Person

- Jeff Davis
- Thabiti Brown
- Cheyenne Wyzzard-Jones
- Xenia Bhembe
- Gassendina Lubintus

Remote

- Melissa Jackson-Collins
- Kwame Dance
- Natassa Mason (6:51 PM)
- Sukia Akiba (6:54 PM)

Call to Order

Chair Jeff Davis called this meeting to order at 6:41 PM.

Agenda

1. Moment to Remember: Reflect (stories & perspective)- 5 Mins (Volunteer)
2. Moment to Connect: Community Voice and Understanding (Public Comment)
    a. No public comment
3. Prime Commission Objectives
4. Relevant Commission Votes
5. Citywide Awareness & Opportunities
6. Chair Meeting Summary

Prime Objectives: Planning Objectives 2026 - 2027 (DACI)

7. Meeting Minute Approval Votes:
    a. September 15th
        i. Edits

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1. Return to open session: Xenia Bhembe was present
2. Diana will redact the executive session
3. Gassendina Lubintus name correction

ii. Approval as amended
1. Seconded
a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
b. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
d. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
f. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
g. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE - Y
h. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON – Y
i. COMMISSIONER SUKIA AKIBA - Absent

b. October 7th (Working Session)
i. Edits
1. Initials need to be written out
2. Section 2.a.ii.2-3 – “Free people of color” exist outside of the *ordinance’s* definition of “American Freedmen” (as opposed to the widespread definition per the 14th Amendment) - the Ordinance does not include people of color who do not have ancestry traced to freed slaves
3. Section 2.a.ii.3 - Remove COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES’s comment

ii. Approval as amended
1. Seconded
a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
b. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
d. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
f. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
g. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE - Y
h. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - Y
i. COMMISSIONER SUKIA AKIBA - Y

8. Review the four Open Meeting Law complaints submitted by Kimberlee Gonsalves, three of which are dated September 24, 2026 and one of which is dated September 25, 2026, and review the City Solicitor's Office's proposed response. Vote whether to authorize the City Solicitor's Office to respond to the Complainant on behalf of the Commission.
a. Welcome, Elliot from the Law Department!
b. Complaints as dated

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i. September 24, 2026
ii. September 25, 2026 (1)
iii. September 25, 2026 (2)
iv. September 25, 2026 (3)

c. Actions
   i. Two of the 09/24/2026 complaints should be resolved by informal action pursuant to 940 CMR 29.07(2)(a), acknowledging that two of the meetings' minutes for the 6/11 and the 6/9 meetings were approved late and the Commission will take steps to see this does not happen again.
   ii. The complaints from 9/24 and 9/25 improperly seeks to impose obligations on the Commission that are not required by Open Meeting Law. Recommendation is for the AG to dismiss.
   iii. The 9/25 complaint did not violate Open Meeting Law due to the complainant's public records request providing draft meeting minutes, not final meeting minutes. Recommendation is for the AG to dismiss.
d. Vote
   i. Elliot suggests the vote taken be to authorize the City Solicitor's Office to respond to the complainant on behalf of the American Freedmen Commission. Jeff Davis presents this to the group
      1. Seconded
         a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
         b. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
         c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
         d. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
         e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
         f. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
         g. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE - Y
         h. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - Y
         i. COMMISSIONER SUKIA AKIBA – Absent
   ii. Passed and approved

9. DACI Decision-Making (Lead: Chair Davis): Reintroduction
   a. Chair Jeff Davis verbally reviews the document titled "Governance Framework & Operating Procedures" regarding the DACI model in Appendix F
   b. Any initiatives must move through the DACI model before getting approved
   c. Questions/Comments
      i. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN asks what the framework process is in order to keep it consistent
         1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS will reshare the original DACI template and paperwork
      ii. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS asks if this is for the whole commission or just how it will operate while COMMISSIONER

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JEFF DAVIS and COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES are chair/vice chair

1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES notes that this is for the commission at large and it was voted in as a governance model for the entirety of the commission
2. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS notes that it's possible this governance framework will change.

iii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks what out of the larger packet needs review

1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS clarifies that the amendments and information in the packets are created by COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS to be more specific about the governance
2. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES clarifies that the original DACI framework will be resent and as of right now the packet is not set in stone

10. Commission Budget & Spending Guidelines, led by Deidre Travis Brown
    a. Orientation to 26-27 City Budgeting process and commission implications
        i. All purchases need to relate directly to the charge of the Ordinance
        ii. Each purchase should consider
            1. Purpose
            2. Outcome
            3. Need
            4. Impact
        iii. The commission is able to recommend priorities, the City is responsible for the purchasing and managing expenditures
    b. Questions/Comments
        i. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks what role the Commission will play in deciding how to spend the money
            1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN notes that the Commission is meant to bring in the "why" - identifying the need and application, while the City staff is responsible for the "how" - purchasing and vendor management, etc.
        ii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks how long a procurement would take
            1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says it depends – things like printing or swag may be immediate, but things like speakers or workshops might take longer.
        iii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS requests an expenditure report for the next meeting.

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iv. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN to set up deadlines for this process to familiarize commission members to the greater structure of the purchasing process

11. SubComm Updates - What have we learned and where we might act:
    a. Community Engagement Overview of Vote (Lead: SC Chair Melissa Jackson-Collins)
        i. Top Initiatives for Final Discussion
            1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS notes that the next meeting should discuss the definition of American Freedmen Commission
            2. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE will prepare a proposal for the Black History Month speaker series for the next regular meeting in November.
            3.
        ii. Voting
            1. Will the Commission accept the current definition of "American Freedmen" as outlined in the Ordinance?
                a. Seconded
                b. Voting
                    i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
                    ii. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
                    iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
                    iv. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
                    v. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
                    vi. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
                    vii. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE - Y
                    viii. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - Y
                    ix. COMMISSIONER SUKIA AKIBA – Y
                c. Passed
            2. Will the Commission go through with the proposal for the Juneteenth event, proposed by COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS?
                a. Tabling this for now – will be voted on the next meeting
                b. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS requests that the proposal be redistributed in the packet for the November meeting

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3. Will the Commission go through with the proposal for the Community Outreach form, designed by COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS?
    a. Tabling this for now – will be voted on the next meeting
    b. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS requests that the proposal be redistributed in the packet for the November meeting
4. Will the Commission review the pamphlet at this meeting?
    a. Seconded
        i. Vote
        ii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
        iii. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
        iv. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
        v. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
        vi. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
        vii. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
        viii. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE - Y
        ix. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - Y
        x. COMMISSIONER SUKIA AKIBA – Absent
    b. Passed
5. Edits to brochure
    a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS suggests creating the text in the document more intentionally and aiming it directly at a specific audience
    b. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES says “Why This Work Matters” might be self-evidenced, and suggests a relational section – why should I get involved as a reader
    c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES says the QR code should go to the Community Outreach form
    d. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN mentions eliminating the pillars as they haven’t defined that as a body
    e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS suggests combining the visuals of CITY STAFF DIANA MILKEY’s brochure with the colors of COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON
        i. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests incorporating visuals down the line and focusing on the text first

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f. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests being clear that the red, white, and blue colors are representative for Juneteenth

6. The subcommittee will revisit the brochure and present it at the next meeting for voting.

b. Research (Lead: SC Chair Thabiti Brown):
   i. Initiatives for Initial Review
      1. According to COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN: Nothing at the moment to report, more updates next meeting
      2. Next meeting: October 28, 2026
c. Ad-Hoc Governance (Lead: SC Chair Jackson-Collins):
   i. Chair COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS suggests a meeting extension of 15 minutes.
      1. Seconded
      2. Voting
         a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
         b. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
         c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
         d. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
         e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
         f. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
         g. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – A (left at 8:30 PM)
      3. Passed
   ii. Overview of Community By-Laws
      1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS presents the bylaws for the body to consider and edit and revisit again at the December meeting.
   iii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE presents a motion to annotate the bylaws by November to vote.
      1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES amends by asking to push the vote to December for proposed the training session.
         a. Accepted
      2. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN amends by saying this should be reviewed by the Chair and Vice Chair. He notes that discussion on this document presented at the full body could take a very long time to edit and get through.
         a. Denied
      3. Motion presented: That the commissioners will review and annotate the bylaws packet before the December meeting.
         a. Seconded

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i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
ii. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - N
iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Abstain
iv. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
v. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
vi. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
vii. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – Absent
viii. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - Abstain

b. Passes

12. Full Body Vote

a. Extend the meeting 8 minutes
   i. Seconded
      1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
      2. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - N
      3. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Abstain
      4. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
      5. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
      6. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
      7. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – Absent
      8. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - N
   ii. Motion passes
b. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES moves that items 13 and 14 be tabled until the next meeting
   i. Seconded
      1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
      2. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
      3. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
      4. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
      5. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
      6. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Abstain
      7. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – Absent
      8. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - Y
   ii. Passes
   iii. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN and City Staff will put it online
c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES moves to approve the Community Outreach form
   i. Seconded
      1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y

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2. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
3. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES - Y
4. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
5. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
6. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
7. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON - Y

ii. Passes

13. **Opportunities and Insights Across the City**
    a. Port Neighborhood Town Hall Meeting (10/14) Shareout
    b. City Council Updates (Lead: Exec Director, City Staff)
    c. "Black Life in Cambridge" - City News and Community Updates (OPEN)
14. Lessons, Successes, and Shared Knowledge on Reparations: Highlighting key learnings, successes, and approaches to reparations efforts across the country
15. ***Chair Meeting Summary & Next Steps***
    a. Commission Operations (Chair Davis)
        i. Commissioner GG has resigned from the American Freedmen Commission.
        ii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS expresses an interest in solidifying Sharepoint and database work.
    b. Outreach Committee
        i. American Freedmen Gathering in December, not happening
    c. Full Commission Training in December
    d. Next meeting: November 17, 2026
16. Adjourn

Vice Chair Cheyenne Wyzzard-Jones adjourned the meeting at 8:56 PM.