

Meeting Date: Oct 7th, 2026

Working Meeting, Remote, 6:30 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.*

Agenda:

Quorum Roll Call

Present: Commissioner Jeff Davis, Gassendina Lubintus, Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones, George Greenidge, Melissa Jackson-Collins, Xenia Bhembe, Natassa Mason, Sukia Akiba, Thabiti Brown

Call to Order

1. Moment to Reflect (stories & perspective)- 5 Mins: Commissioner Led

Prime Objective (Our Work for the Day): - Subcommittee Activations

2. SubComm Insights: What have we learned and where we might act
 - a. Community Engagement Subcommittee Recommendations
 - i. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS as chair talks about summer focus: Framework for engagement strategies
 - ii. Realizing the definition and timeline of American Freedmen
 1. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE reads the definition from Elliot at the City Solicitor’s Office – “those particular people freed from chattel slavery within the United States and their descendants... between the 14th and the 19th century”
 2. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS recommends that this definition is reviewed in the future and expresses concerns that this definition may be exclusionary. There is some confusion among members as to why this would be a problem. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES notes that a definition outside of this

Meeting Date: Oct 7th, 2026

would be outside of the Ordinance and would require a change in the direction of the ordinance's charge.

3. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS clarifies that there could be people who exist outside of the legal definition who are still technically Freedmen.

COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES clarifies that the Ordinance does not strictly include "freed people of color" but that they could still be Freedmen.

iii. Community Sessions on the horizon

1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS mentions wanting to set up community education or listening sessions together with the Research Subcommittee to create a plan
2. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS mentions setting up events related to Black History Month and Juneteenth
 - a. Juneteenth event would be the event proposal from last year that COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS presented
 - b. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE presents an idea for Black History Month for a speaker series as a platform for discussing genealogy and other methods of identifying Freedmen, encouraging community education and feedback

iv. Mailing and Information Distribution

1. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE mentions that the definition work is related directly to creating a pamphlet and distribution of information to the community and mentions a mailing and canvassing strategy

v. Comments from commissioners

1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS mentions that action is a priority right now, expressing insecurity at the loss of time due to extraneous circumstances in the commission's first year. He mentions wanting to engage the community in smaller events so they will show up for the larger ones.
2. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN suggests discussing the large events a little further, and wants to talk more about capacity that the commission wants to take on, suggesting a slightly lighter load

Meeting Date: Oct 7th, 2026

3. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks for a timeline of events and/or projects from the Community Outreach Subcommittee to help contextualize how they would like to go about planning
- b. Research Subcommittee Recommendations
 - i. Reparations Study Halls and Listening Sessions
 1. Community based sessions guiding people from the community in learning about reparations and definitions of the work
 2. Engaging people to research their own backgrounds in Massachusetts and abroad
 - ii. Speakers
 1. Enlisting scholars and/or well-known speakers to discuss reparations work on a higher level and discuss how this is being done in other parts of the country
 - iii. Comments from Subcommittee Members
 1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES notes that the goal for this next year for the research subcommittee is to build a strong foundation so they can build a sustainable approach to the work.
 2. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES mentions that being thoughtful about whose ideas they are working from in order to prioritize transitional justice
 - iv. Comments from Commission Members
 1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS concurs that starting with education and leading with that focus is best as a priority
 2. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks the difference between community learning opportunities and the reparation study halls.
 - a. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN notes that they are mostly “gradations of learning,” establishing what is currently known and whether or not the work is being informed by history so that commissioners can know about the work and therefore pass on accurate information to the community. The study halls are for the community, the speaker series would be more for the Commission.

Meeting Date: Oct 7th, 2026

- b. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES notes that trainings and Commission learning are based in the speaker series and to invite researchers to give the group more in depth.
 - 3. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks if the Historical Commission was consulted as a resource.
 - a. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN confirms that they will be contacted.
- 3. General subcommittee discussion
 - a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS expresses hesitation to take on all of the aforementioned projects, expressing that research and community outreach need to happen in tandem, but also expresses that even small progress or a small community event would be worthwhile
 - b. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS mentions her draft of the Community Comment Submission Form and asks for a vote at the next meeting on it so the Community can reach it
 - i. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS notes that this draft will be shared to review ahead of the regular meeting
 - c. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN requests to review the definition, the pamphlet, and the community comment submission form ahead of the next regular meeting
 - d. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS requests a meeting with COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN to talk about aligning the goals of the research subcommittee with the community outreach subcommittee.
 - e. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks if Diana can edit the pamphlet. Diana confirms she is not able to.
 - i. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests hiring an artist to do the pamphlet and logo that is an American Freedman, but also says that they should keep this as simple as possible for the first round
 - ii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE expresses concern that finding an artist may extend the process of printing a pamphlet and then could delay the distribution further
 - f. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS encourages the Commissioners to find a good way to “idea share” research and connections to events, using small connections to pull together ways the AFC can get involved in spaces around the community

Meeting Date: Oct 7th, 2026

- i. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE suggests checking out events using FindIt! Cambridge
- g. Closing
 - i. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE brings up a community meeting in The Port coming up to be a part of a discussion about community safety
 - ii. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. brings up the Civic Assembly that Cambridge is implementing and mentions his excitement for it
 - iii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS asks for a meeting with DCOMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN and DM to discuss further streamlining of administrative tasks
 - iv. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says the next meeting will be on October 20th

Adjournment

Chair Commissioner Jeff Davis called the meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM.