

Meeting Date: February 24, 2026

Attendance:

~~☐ Akiba, Sukia*~~
~~☐ Bastola, Kashish~~
~~☐ Bhembe, Xenia~~
~~☐ Brown, Thabiti~~
~~☐ Collins, Melissa~~
~~☐ Dance, Kwame~~
~~☐ Davis, Jeff*~~
~~☐ Greenidge, George~~

~~☐ Lubintus,
Gassendina~~
~~☐ Mason, Natassa~~
~~☐ Paris, Paula~~
~~☐ Wyzard Jones,
Cheyenne~~

City AFC Staff

~~☐ Brown, Deidre~~
~~☐ Milkey, Diana~~

** Arrived after the meeting
was called to order*

Online Commission Participants: Meeting is fully remote due to weather

Residents/Guests:

- **Welcome**
- **Quorum & Call to Order**
 - George Greenidge called this meeting to order at 6:36 PM.
- **Public Comment**
- **Review of City Solicitor’s Guidance on OML & Governance, Agendas, Meeting Times & Notice**
 - Agenda item moved up to accommodate the City solicitor’s time constraints.
 - GG mentions that he requested support from the City Manager before Megan Bayer spoke due to errors regarding several meetings being cancelled
 - He also said that commissioners needed to sign off that they read and agree with the Attorney General’s Handbook guide to Open Meeting Law. He notes that typically the City provides a handbook to Commissioners, but the City of Cambridge does not have one and he believed that it should and had passed that opinion on to the City Solicitor and City Manager.
 - City Solicitor Megan Bayer introduces herself and explains her role as

- Solicitor in the Law Department, able to meet and give legal guidance with regards to commissions and Open Meeting Law.
- Commissioner Melissa Jackson-Collins asks if the document Commissioner Greenidge sent out with his questions and the City Solicitor's answers is official.
 - MB says that her answers to the questions are what she provided and are official insofar as that it is her advice.
 - MB begins the discussion on Open Meeting Law noting that all public meetings need to be accessible for everyone who would want to attend, including remote, in-person, and hybrid meetings.
 - GG asks if the Commission can have a meeting in a physically accessible space, but without remote capability. MB confirms that this is possible.
 - MB says that although the Chair chooses when to call meetings, it should be done with the consensus of the Commission as to how they allow access to the meeting.
 - Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones asks what the difference is between a "working meeting" and a "public meeting."
 - MB advises that as long as there is quorum meeting together, it is considered a public meeting under Open Meeting Law.
 - Subsets of the Commission are allowed to meet separately, but if a group is meeting and they meet quorum, it has to be posted publicly and compliant with Open Meeting Law.
 - Open Meeting Law considers deliberation, and administrative tasks do not count as deliberation.
 - Commissioner Kwame Dance asks if the Commission works on a collective document or uses the "Reply All" function in email, would that count as deliberation?
 - MB suggests that dissemination of documents and materials go through the Executive Director and City Staff so that full emails are not considered "deliberation."
 - KD asks if "BCC" should be used to avoid this.

- MB advises not to use BCC, since no one would know who the email went to.
- Commissioner Melissa Jackson-Collins asks if putting emails and documents as “read-only” in a Sharepoint website would be better to disseminate information.
 - MB says that expressing views or reports to the full Commission over email would be sharing with a quorum, therefore partially violating Open Meeting Law.
 - MB also says that making documents read-only would be appropriate.
 - MJC asks if collaborative document work would be appropriate by a subcommittee.
 - MB advises that subcommittees have their own quorum, and that their work would be affected by Open Meeting Law. Deliberations of any group should be done at a meeting.
- Commissioner Jeff Davis asks the City Solicitor her advice on being efficient in communication, as he currently feels like he is getting lost in the Commission’s current process of organization.
 - MB advises that the Commission should come up with a set of norms and basic rules of engagement for communication. She suggests commission bylaws be put in place and rules of order be established by the Commission.
 - She advises that City staff Deidre Travis Brown and Diana Milkey can offer advice on how to run the meetings as well until the Executive Director is hired.
- MJC notes that the Commission has already established that they would be using Robert’s Rules of Order as of November 2025. She asks if the document they have used to establish Roles and Responsibilities of Commissioners and Staff is official.
 - MB advises that the Commission needs to act as a body, and that the other Commissions in the City operate under Robert’s Rules of Order.
 - MJC asks if the meeting minutes from November contain

information about a vote to use or not use Robert's Rules. Staff Diana Milkey said there was a note that there was talk of finding an alternative, but no consensus was reached. MJC notes that the Commission has been operating under these rules by default. Corroborated by Jeff Davis.

- GG asks who the Commission reports to.
 - MB says the Commissioners are appointed by the City Council and City manager and supported and staffed by the Executive Director and the Department of Equity and Inclusion.
- **Public Comment**
 - GG asks for Public Comment. No Public Comment.
- **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
 - Commissioner Kwame Dance moves to approve the minutes. Seconded. Approved.
- **Consent Agenda - Correspondence to the Commission**
 - A member of the public had reached out to Commissioner George Greenidge saying that he was having trouble finding information about the Commission online.
- **Reports & Updates**
 - Chair's Report / Updates
 - GG mentions that the ordinance says that a meeting can be called with 48 hours' notice.
 - JD asks if GG as Chair has to call the meeting to order. GG says he will "work this through."
 - MJC says that subcommittees have Subcommittee Chairs. GG insists that he needs to work on establishing this with staff and that this will be discussed at a future meeting.
 - GG asks ED DTB if he is able to convene subcommittee meetings. DTB advises that meeting times should be proposed to the body and voted on collectively.
 - Commissioners' Reports
 - Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones asks about the PDF George Greenidge sent out and points out an inconsistency in distribution.

- Jeff Davis asks for a summary of the reports as he was not able to review.
- CWJ asks GG to provide to create talking points for the Commission
- Melissa Jackson Collins' Report – Governance and Infrastructure
 - Orientation, standard operations, workspaces, checks and balances, authority, conflict of interest protocols, meeting minutes, etc.
 - This report should be helpful to create a regulatory process for the American Freedmen Commission.
- MJC's Report – Juneteenth Events Pitch - "A Great Day in Cambridge"
 - MJC notes that it was not included in the packet GG sent out and that it should be reviewed first.
 - The idea is an open-air historical museum, market, and brunch for American Freedmen.
 - MJC requests that the Commission can review the proposal before next meeting to discuss the directions to move.
- Commissioner Xenia Bhembe's Report – Administrative Policy
- CWJ's Report – Response to Federal Violence, Working Groups, Public Learning Arts & Engagement Initiative
 - Proposed project using arts and visual mediums to create engagement and public learning
 - CWJ notes that this could be similar to what MJC mentioned and that they could likely collaborate
- CWJ's Report – Transitional Justice
 - Policy and legislative research as it pertains to creation of reparation policies
- **Old Business**
 - Executive Director Search & Updates
 - DTB says that she shared the budget information recently to everyone on the commission.

- The budget for FY26 \$320,000, with \$208,196 left until the refresh in June 2026.
- DTB is currently working with all of the Commission Executive Directors to create a structured budget for each Commission. She suggests that if there is a budget proposal that each item be noted exactly what the money will be used for before it is presented.
- CWJ asks if it would be a better idea if each subcommittee should be formed and elect a Subcommittee Chair before budget proposals are sent in the interest of efficiency.
 - GG asks to interrupt and says that he believes there is not enough time for individual groups to convene before the budget is due and says that he put together a proposal that he would like to review.
 - CWJ says that the work he has done is important, but the commission should be able to negotiate proposals so that the body can act together instead of one person driving the ideas. This is corroborated by MJC.
 - GG asks to save this for the discussion under the budget item.
- Compliance Documents from the City Clerk
 - GG asks if everyone has signed off on the required trainings. DTB confirms everyone has.
- Review of Handbook “Attorney General’s 2025 Open Meeting Law Guide” & Acknowledgment of Receipt
 - GG says that he will be sending this around.
 - DTB asks if what the Commissioners have already signed was related to this. GG says he does not think it’s the same.
- Commissioner Stipends & Required Paperwork
 - DTB says she sent out information regarding the stipends and paperwork recently.
- Review of Conflict of Interest & Harassment Policies
 - GG requests that everyone read this.

- DTB points out that everyone has already done this training.
- Review of AFC Bios / Pictures – Comments
 - GG asks for comments or changes for bios or pictures.
- Review of AFC Questions & Answers Document (Prepared by George Greenidge) – Comments
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- Update on AFC Website & Website System Upgrades – Comments
 - DTB confirms that the website is up and the content that was created for it is up on the City Website.
 - DTB asks for clarification about the “upgrades.” GG says that there will be a new system setup. DTB clarifies that the Commission platform is changing from Accella and that the commissioner information will be posted.
 - DM notes that staff will be using the new platform and that she is part of a group that will be testing it.
 - DTB notes that DM has set up a Sharepoint site and that someone from the Law Department will be reviewing it before it goes live to make sure it is compliant with Open Meeting Law.
- AFC Budget YTD Review - FY2025/2026 – Comments (Deidre Brown)
 - GG asks for comments on his proposed budget. He notes that there will be another meeting that they will be able to discuss the budget further.
 - MJC asks DTB if a fund is earmarked for one thing if the Commission will be able to change what the funds are used for.
 - DTB confirms that money can be redistributed.
 - MJC asks if the FY26 money needs to be used by a certain date.
 - DTB confirms that the fiscal year ends on June 30th, 2026 and that FY26 funds will not be available in FY27.
 - GG asks if they encumber funds.
 - DTB confirms they do and notes that encumbrance is when dollars are set aside for a specific payment or budget item.
 - JD asks if there are risks of not using the funds and where the

- money goes.
- DTB says there is no risk, especially since this is a newer Commission and that they will not be affected by any budgetary cuts for the next couple fiscal years.
 - GG asks if the Commission is able to ask for the money they want and have it approved or denied.
 - DTB confirms this is possible.
 - AFC Budget Exercise for FY2025/2026 & FY2026/2027 & FY2027/2028 – Comments (Prepared by George Greenidge)
 - DTB advises that there are budgetary restrictions active in the City right now due to federal cuts, and that any budgetary requests remain realistic.
 - KD asks what GG wants to know about his budget proposal. GG says that he wants comment or questions about what he sent out.
 - CWJ notes that this is moving a little too fast and suggests that a working meeting to set the agenda for the budget. She says that she wants to think about the role of the Commission and notes that the Commission needs to focus on repair and harm. She says she will share these ideas at the next meeting about this.
 - GG says he will put the budget to committee.
 - KD asks about the \$80,000 for Community Based Grants and asks for GG to elaborate. KD then is disconnected after freezing, so his question was not answered.
 - Commissioner Xenia Bhembe suggests that time be taken for the budget outside of this current meeting.
 - **New Business**
 - Commissioner Resignations / Potential Resignations / Position Resignations
 - Commissioner Paula Paris has resigned.
 - GG says he will send a thank-you note to her on behalf of the Commission.

- Commissioner Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones resigns as Vice Chair, saying that she will remain in the position until another is elected.
 - MJC asks if this is a final decision. CWJ says she would like to have someone in the role who can match capacity with the current Chair, George Greenidge.
 - Commissioner Thabiti Brown suggests that capacity should be reevaluated if there is a discrepancy in capacity between Chair and Commissioners.
 - CWJ says that she does not want to be in a role where her voice is not adequate enough to match the capacity of the Chair and asks for Commissioners to step up and match him.
 - JD thanks CWJ for her honesty and agrees with MJC's previous comment about establishing a better structure so people can be clearer on their roles. He notes that organization shouldn't be ignored in favor of focusing on budget.
 - CWJ asks about "mini-grants" and if the grants are available to Commissioners/if the Commission can apply if it's pertinent
 - GG says that they would be able to apply, but can't work on the formation of the grants or it would create a conflict of interest.
 - DTB corroborates and notes that it depends on the guidelines.
- **XB makes a motion to extend the meeting until 9:00 PM.**
 - Yea: MJC, JD, CWJ, GG, NM, GL, SA
 - Nay: KD, KB, TB
- **GG makes a motion to extend the meeting until 8:40**
 - Yea: Unanimous
 - Meeting extended
- **Continued New Business**

- Commissioner Appointments & Reappointments (Effective July 1, 2026)
 - GG confirms that Commissioners Thabiti Brown, Sukia Akiba, and Kwame Dance are single year terms and says he will email the City Manager to bring them back on for a second term.
 - MJC asks if we should ask who drafts the emails on behalf of the Commission. She suggests that in addition to the budget meeting the Commission needs to set up subcommittees and a governance framework so the Commission operates as a body.
 - Commissioner Kashish Bastola says that his term also ends with the one year turnover and that he has to move away from Cambridge and cannot be reappointed.
 - KD says he is comfortable with GG drafting the letter for his reappointment.
 - GG says that he has had conversations with several commissioners about roles and reappointments.
 - MJC notes that this is one of the transparency issues that she had previously cited and that the role of Chair seems to be different than how she was made aware of it.
 - DTB says that if you are planning on resigning, the notification needs to go to the Executive Director so the offboarding process can be started.
 - GG clarifies that he has put everything other Commissioners have said to him on the agenda.
- Understanding Quorum
- Review of the AFC Chair's Role & Responsibilities
 - GG proposes that this will be discussed in the next meeting.
 - MJC asks if we are using the City's Roles and Responsibilities or the Attorney General's, as GG had said
 - GG says that if a document that the City writes conflicts with the AG's office, they default to following the AG's
 - XB asks to come up with a date and time to have a budget meeting, suggesting the upcoming Saturday.
 - GG says there is a rule against not having a meeting on

- Saturday. DTB says she's not aware of this but will check.
- DTB says they need to meet before the 13th of March.
 - **GG moves to have a budget meeting next Tuesday, March 3rd at 6:30 online.**
 - Yea: Unanimous
 - VOTE: Three (3) Documents for Full Commission Review – Budget Vote (FY2025/2026)
 - This will be discussed at the meeting on March 3rd.
 - MJC asks about the proposed budget and expresses concern that GG's language changes the mandate of the City Ordinance. She is also concerned that these definitions and direction of the Commission should be deliberated by the Commission before they discuss how they want to move forward with programming. She suggests bringing the Law Department in to facilitate.
 - GG thanks her for her comments and says that they have to put this in a separate meeting. MJC asks to add this as an agenda item for next week.
 - GG says he will add it to the agenda and the group can decide how the meeting will go.
 - CWJ asks GG if he, as an individual, is responding to the State House document or if he is asking to react as the Commission.
 - GG says he wants to review the document.
 - CWJ asks again what they should review at the meeting next week.
 - GG says there is a limited time in the meeting and it may not be possible to discuss budget, infrastructure, and the State House at the same meeting.
 - CWJ notes again that she is concerned GG is acting on behalf of the Commission without the permission of the body. She suggests putting this on hold.
 - GG says that he will take a vote.
 - Commissioner Xenia Bhembe makes a motion that emails related to meetings

- be submitted by 3 business days before the meeting.
- Yea: KD, MJC, CWJ, JD, GL, GG, KB
 - Commissioner Xenia Bhembe makes a motion that emails be sent for only active projects relevant to the Commission. This does not include events, opportunities, and meetings not related to the Cambridge American Freedman Commission.
 - Yea: KD, JD, GG, MJC, KB, CWJ
 - The following agenda items are saved for the next meeting:
 - VOTE: Three (3) Documents for Full Commission Review – Administrative Vote
 - Other Matters Not Anticipated by the Chair - (These items will be put on record.)
 - **Next Meetings Announcements & Community Announcements**
 - Confirmation of Date for Next Working Session
 - Next working session will be on Tuesday, March 3, 2026
 - Confirmation of Date for Next Official Monthly Commission Meeting
 - Next Monthly Meeting will be on Tuesday, March 17, 2026.
 - **Adjournment**
 - Commissioner Kwame Dance moves to close the meeting.
 - Yea: Unanimous
 - **The meeting is adjourned at 8:56 PM.**