

Meeting Date: April 28, 2026

Attendance:

Akiba, Sukia
 Bastola, Kashish
 Brown, Thabiti
 Collins, Melissa
 Dance, Kwame
 Davis, Jeff
 Greenidge, George

~~Johnson, Xenia~~
 Lubintus,
Gassendina
 ~~Mason, Natassa~~
 ~~Wyzard Jones,~~
Cheyenne

City AFC Staff

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

** Arrived after the meeting
was called to order*

Action Items will be highlighted in yellow

Public Members: Ayesha Wilson

1. **Call to Order by Chairperson George Greenidge**
 - a. **This meeting of the American Freedmen Commission was called to order at 6:41 PM.**
2. **Quorum & Roll Call**
3. **Public Comment**
 - a. Khalida Griffin-Sheperd calls in to discuss planning for Juneteenth, stating that she can send a link to anyone who wants to help with planning
 - b. Nicola Williams states that she is excited for supporting this commission and shares that on the 19th there will be an Afro-Caribbean marketplace for the community
 - c. Peter Brown states his interest in the Commission as a longtime resident and descendent of Cambridge
 - d. Ayesha Wilson states a concern that progress is not happening as fast as it should and that the community is not seeing it. She is here to “underscore the urgency” of making progress on the Commission’s goals. She also expresses concern over the remaining money in the budget for the end of the fiscal year. She states that it would be a disservice to the community if the money goes unutilized.
4. **Consent Agenda**
 - a. Review & Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
 - i. Commissioner Jeff Davis expresses concern that the agenda is different. Staff member Diana Milkey clarifies that the previous meeting did not approve any minutes, but she did receive edits.
 - ii. Commissioner Kwame Dance moves to approve the minutes.
 1. Seconded
 2. Vote
 - a. GG – Y
 - b. KB – Y

- c. TB – Y
 - d. XB – Y
 - e. KD – Y
 - f. JD – Y
 - g. CWJ – Y
 - h. MJC – Y
 - i. NM – Y
3. The minutes have been approved.
- b. Review of Commission Forms & Stipends Paperwork
 - i. GG reminds the commissioners to go into City Hall to complete their forms in order to receive their stipends. He says we should get it finished by June 1
 - ii. Commissioner NM asks if she needs to do online paperwork. GG says that someone from the City Clerk’s office needs to sign off on the I9. Chief of Equity and Inclusion Deidre Travis Brown agrees.
 - c. Review of the State of Massachusetts Conflicts of Interest & Disclosures
 - i. These have been sent to commissioners.
 - d. Review of Attorney General's 2025 OML Booklet & Acknowledgment
 - i. This has been sent to commissioners.
 - e. Review of the CAFC Chair's Job Description
 - i. This has been sent to commissioners.
 - f. By a unanimous vote, these items pass as recognized.
 - i. DTB adds that when a consent agenda is approved, everything under the “consent agenda” marker is approved.
 - ii. Commissioner Melissa Jackson-Collins asks if the “chair’s job description” is the same one that was reviewed in the November meeting.
 - 1. GG says it is, and that if anything on there is “wrong,” then the Solicitor suggests following state guidelines.
 - 2. JD says he has questions about the Chair Job Description and makes a motion to have a parliamentarian. Xenia Bhembe suggests Thabiti Brown
 - a. Seconded
 - b. XB Y
 - c. KD Y
 - d. JD Y
 - e. MJC Y
 - f. NM Y
 - g. SA Y
 - h. CWJ Y
 - i. GG Y
 - 3. GG mentions that he understood that there was going to be a subcommittee group that discussed governance.

4. DM mentions that there was going to be an adhoc governance subcommittee meeting that didn't happen.
5. JD says that there is not currently an active dialogue between Commissioners and the Chair and that his voice is not currently being heard.
 - a. GG says that the job of the Chair is to create the agenda for meetings. JD clarifies if this involves the advice of the Commission. GG says it does.
 - b. GG says again that the subcommittee that did not meet is talking about the structure and governance of the commission.
 - c. JD says that this discussion needs to be a priority, as the advice of the community is that the Commission is not making enough progress.
6. KD suggests moving through updates from Old Business and then to continue the conversation after the fact.

5. Old Business

- a. Website Update & Update on City of Cambridge's Communications Team on CAFC Materials
 - i. DTB says there are multiple requests pending for social media, brochures, websites, and other public information.
 1. Meeting minutes from December have been uploaded.
 2. Recordings of meetings will be updated on the website.
 - ii. Brochure
 1. GG suggested a marketing brochure and asked the Communications team to make it. They don't usually do that, so staff member Diana Milkey has made a draft.
 2. Includes "Who are American Freedmen," "What is Transitional Justice," Contact info, and meeting information
 - iii. Pictures
 1. Added photos requested to the website
 - iv. Videos
 1. GG requested videos for the American Freedman Commission from 22CityView.
 2. DTB is not sure what the videos would contain and suggests another conversation with the Commission about it.
 - v. Social Media
 1. Staff are working on setting up social media posts for the Commission's upcoming meetings.
 - vi. MJC asks where the brochure will be distributed
 1. GG suggests tabling at events and City communications.
 - vii. MJC asks when GG asked the Commission what information he wants disseminated. This confusion is echoed by others.

1. GG says that this is not being disseminated, just worked on.
 2. MJC says that this needs to be worked on as a body, not just disseminated as a body.
 3. GG suggests picking a committee to work on these things right now. JD says that that would be out of order, considering no other committees have been created.
 4. GG says that it was supposed to be talked about at a previous meeting. He says everything on the website was “taken from the Ordinance” and that he gave everyone information to review back in December. JD says that he doesn’t remember that and that it seems like GG is moving on his own instead of with the consent of the body.
 5. NM says she feels “left out” and wonders why George is making decisions without consulting the group for what needs to happen.
 6. GG says they should set up a subcommittee to discuss this. MJC says that there was always going to be a subcommittee for it, but the one on infrastructure needs to happen first.
 7. TB suggests tabling it for a future date and to send it to a committee in the future.
 8. KD moves to table 5A. MJC amends to say this needs to be addressed by the next meeting in May.
 - a. MJC suggests a write up. Staff will work on this for Commissioners to review.
 - b. Seconded
 - i. GG A
 - ii. KB A
 - iii. TB Y
 - iv. XB Y
 - v. KD Y
 - vi. JD Y
 - vii. CWJ A
 - viii. SA Y
 - ix. MJC Y
 - x. NM Y
 - c. Passed
 - d. Diana will send the write up of the proposed questions to the Commission to review by next week.
- b. Executive Director Search and Update
 - i. DTB says we are still looking and pulling it down to a smaller group. We are currently doing reference checks and consulting the City Manager.

- ii. DTB says that more information will come before the May meeting.
- iii. GG asks for more information and “numbers.”
 - 1. DTB says 57 applied, most out of state.
 - 2. 5 Cantabrigians were interviewed, 2 of which identify as American Freedmen
- iv. CWJ asks when the Commission will hear. DTB says it will be brought to the Commission before the decision has been made.
- c. Budget Update with City Manager's Office & Cambridge City Council & Review of AFC Budget - 2025-2026 Proposed and 2026-2027 Proposed
 - i. DTB says that budgets have been submitted, the hearing is next Tuesday, May 5th.
 - ii. Final approval is not until June by the City Council.
 - iii. The hearing is public, so Commissioners can watch online if they choose.
 - iv. GG asks Deidre to talk more about it for “education.” DTB says they asked questions last year about demographics, spending, and impact numbers from programs.
- d. Discussion & Updates on CAFC Working Groups & Adhoc Committees
 - i. KD suggests this is where they can continue to discuss the working groups.
 - ii. XB says that at the 17th meeting they set up the different groups already.
 - iii. MJC suggests a working session meeting to set up the working groups.
 - 1. XB motions to set up a working group meeting to discuss subcommittees on May 12
 - a. Seconded
 - i. GG Y
 - ii. KB Y
 - iii. TB Y
 - iv. XB Y
 - v. CWJ Y
 - vi. SA Y
 - vii. KD Y
 - viii. JD Y
 - ix. MJC Y
 - x. NMY
 - 2. CWJ proposes that subcommittees meet on May 12 after being established.
 - 3. GG asks about agenda items.
 - a. CWJ says there should be more information about proposals for the end of the fiscal year.
 - b. DTB also mentions that the City’s timeline for

- spending ends in May and that she will report on when that is to people. CWJ asks for a list to be emailed to people.
- c. DM confirms that Sharepoint should be up and available for commissioners to work on by the next meeting.
 - d. CWJ says that anything on the SharePoint will not be automatically seen by all and there should be no assumption about review of materials.
 - e. Formation of Members on CAFC Working Groups and Chairs
 - i. See above
 - ii. JD notes that the governance committee will be meeting within the next ten days.
 - 1. DTB clarifies that the meeting on the 12th will be a working meeting and Commissioners cannot make decisions or vote.
 - 2. Scheduling will happen at the end of this meeting.
 - f. Administrative & Research & Programming Pending Votes (6 proposals)
 - i. GG claims that his proposals don't come only from him and come from many members of the community that have asked him for specific ideas.
 - ii. GG asks for recommendations on how to submit proposals for budget uses.
 - iii. CWJ says this item should be tabled until a process is established and governance is established. She suggests letting the governance committee discuss the process.
 - iv. DTB reminds everyone the charge of the Commission and encourages everyone to align these proposals with the recommendations for reparations that need to be submitted to the City Manager.
 - v. CWJ says that proposals should come after the establishment of working groups and understanding how transitional justice works before any of this can happen. TB agrees and says that proposals are currently a bit tangential to the work that needs to get done and that the Commission needs to be focused on the charge.
 - vi. GG says that he disagrees and that the proposals he has suggested are still important as "pre-work." He says that each one of them needs to be considered individually.
 - 1. KD asks what "pre-work" is.
 - 2. GG compares it to "book setting," where everyone is able to do standard work. KD asks how this is different than just doing research. GG says he considers work in the community to be as important as research work. He claims that if the audience isn't invested, there will be no results.

3. JD disagrees and says that doing too much without guidance could not line up with the Commission's charge. Moving too fast could misalign the Commission with the Ordinance. GG again expresses concern about not engaging the community and says that community members whom he knows have been "left out."
 4. CWJ says that structure needs to be established before community input and advice can be used. She says that if the committees can establish this, it would be worthwhile.
- g. Clarification of CAFC Re-Appointments of Commission Members
- i. GG asks about the involvement of the City manager in re-appointment.
 - ii. DTB assures him that attendance records and information is being shared with the CM so the decisions can be made properly. She also brings up the staggered terms and will validate information about who is up for re-appointment.
 - iii. DTB also mentions that all ordinances will be reviewed soon for effectiveness.
 - iv. The City will be able to handle the process on Commissioners who will be continuing their tenure. DTB says she will reach out individually if there are openings.
 - v. KD asks if Commission roles are defined as "internal." DTB clarifies that board elections are annual as written in the Ordinance.

6. New Business

- a. CAFC Role in Cambridge's Juneteenth activities in 2026 and 2027
 - i. GG says that he spoke with the Committee for Juneteenth Celebration at the NAACP brunch and said that DTB would join meetings to plan.
 - ii. DTB says that she told the planning committee that the Commission had not decided about their participation in the Juneteenth celebration for 2026.
 - iii. JD mentions that he's not sure why the Commission was asked to join in on Juneteenth planning, as it doesn't align with the Ordinance and the goals of the Commission.
 - iv. MJC says that there was a discussion and that the body decided that they would not participate in a 2026 celebration and instead plan for 2027.
 - v. JD says that when planning structure, better communication among the Commissioners would be beneficial to align it better with what the Commission is supposed to accomplish. He expresses concern that some members of the community may not understand what the Commission is meant to be doing. XB agrees.
 - vi. JD says that communications should be left to the Staff and

Commissioners should not make promises to people in the community based on what they can and can't do.

- vii. CWJ advises that a 3-5 year plan can help with impact and organization. She also says that not using the budget is an important concern of the public and that this needs to be clarified with goals set.
- viii. MJC makes a motion that the next meeting address both subcommittees and how to spend some of the money. DTB advises that not all of the money will be able to be spent.
- ix. XB motions to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.
 - 1. Seconded
 - 2. Unanimous Yes
- b. Other Items not Anticipated by Chair & Announcements
 - i. GG states that he is going to move on as Chair but stay on the Commission.
 - 1. He believes that the job is different than what he signed up for and called the organization "headless," noting that he was confused by the description of the job and what the Chair is supposed to do.
 - 2. He states that the next meeting will be his last meeting as Chair.
 - 3. He says that he "doesn't know" the people in the room well enough and that he believes he can't do his job as Chair.
 - 4. He is still interested in doing the research and encourages other people to step up as Chair.
 - 5. He says that the body has "violated open meeting law many times" and cautions the body to look out for that.
 - ii. MJC asks CWJ if she will be stepping into this role. She declines and asks when the vote will be. GG says the vote for the next chair will be on May 19th.
- c. **Next Meeting: Finalize Budget, Outstanding Votes - Administrative & Research & Programming/Outreach - 6 proposals have been submitted since February 2026**
 - i. JD suggests alternating meetings of subcommittee meetings and scheduled meetings. The commission widely agrees.
 - ii. MJC suggests weekly meetings until the end of the May and biweekly in June to create a plan for the remainder of 2026.
 - iii. TB says that the next few meetings should aim to understand the work and how the budget can support it.
 - iv. GG says that a budget meeting can be held without public notice.
 - v. The governance subcommittee will meet next week, and a working group meeting will be on May 12.
- d. **This meeting was adjourned at 8:46 PM**