

**Meeting Date: May 12, 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

**Call to Order:**

Chair George Greenidge called this meeting of the American Freedman Commission to order at 6:45 PM.

**Agenda and Minutes:**

**1. Call to Order**

- a. Chair George Greenidge reminds the public attending and the commissioners that there will be no votes taken today and that the purpose of this meeting is solely for reviewing suggestions and proposals.

**2. Working Groups & Ad-Hoc Group Discussions & Purpose**

- a. Commissioner Melissa Jackson-Collins expresses a concern that she requested a discussion about the governance and oversight process for the AFC and that it was not added to the agenda.
  - i. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says there are no votes taking place today.
  - ii. Commissioner Jeff Davis says that the ad-hoc governance committee had already met in order to present their discussions at the working group meeting today.
  - iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES corroborates and says the meeting should start by reviewing the framework that the Ad-Hoc governance committee had established.
- b. Ad-Hoc Governance Committee
  - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS draws attention to his document titled "AFC Decision Making Framework." He pauses to make sure the people online are able to view the document.
    1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS summarizes the document

- a. This framework extracts values and mission from the AFC Ordinance and weighs those against perceived efficacy, ease of implementation, and the response to impacted communities to determine what proposals to pursue
  - b. The system is called DACI, standing for Driver, Approver, Consulted, Informed
  - c. This framework sets out to give decision-making power to the body and grounding all of the decisions in the Ordinance and compliance with Open Meeting Law
  - d. There is an emphasis on cultural sensitivity and empathy in order to recognize the Commission and the people it serves and the autonomy of those parties
  - e. DACI Model
    - i. Driver – Who owns the decision-making process?
      1. This will always be the commission
    - ii. Approver – Who has the final yes/no authority
      1. This will always be the full commission
    - iii. Consulted – What groups or persons give input before the decision is made
      1. E&I Department, Staff, etc.
    - iv. Informed – Who is told of the outcome
      1. Public and City Manager’s Office
  - f. Who fits what role is laid out for the Commission to consider in the document
2. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS pauses for questions
    - a. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks if the agenda on the Governance and Decision-Making Framework is the agenda for today.
      - i. It is not – it is the agenda for the ad-hoc governance meeting
    - ii. The second document written out by COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE, COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS, and Commissioner Melissa Jackson-Collins are proposals for Governance and Decision-Making Framework
      1. Frameworks
        - a. Framework 1 – authored by Commissioner

## Greenidge

- i. Focuses on leadership with Chair, Executive Director, and Chief of Equity and Inclusion Deidre Travis Brown consulting in an Administrative Committee
- b. Framework 2 – authored by Commissioner Melissa Jackson-Collins
  - i. Focuses on legal strength and measures for public facing information
  - ii. Introduces a 16-point governance framework
- c. Framework 3 – authored by Commissioner Jeff Davis
  - i. Follows “relational equity” in order to ground the Commission with core principles and the insight of groups like this who have come before.
  - ii. Uses the DACI framework mentioned in the first document
- d. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS brings up the relationship between frameworks, noting that all three compliment and overlap with each other – framework 2 is structural, framework 3 is executive
  - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS agrees and compares it to a building – F2 is the frame and layout of the building, F3 is what goes in the rooms
  - ii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says all three of these “stack” and build on top of each other. Framework 1’s proposal for subcommittees illustrates how to adjust Framework 2 to focus on the scope of the work that Framework 3 provides.

## 2. Questions

- a. Commissioner Xenia Bhembe asks Jeff to explain what a “relational framework” would be in this case
  - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says that his

idea of a relational framework involves creating a set of governing values to ensure that the voices of the Commissioners and the voices of the Community are heard in equal measure. It would also distribute the power equally and would mean that the Commission as a body would have to be fully aligned before making a decision or enacting a proposal. (See: Framework 3, subsection “Six Governing Principles”)

- ii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE says this is similar to establishing a “trust” on behalf of the people they will be serving. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS enthusiastically agrees.
- b. Commissioner Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones asks if this is a suggestion to have both a relational and technical model, and asks to clarify what they would vote on at the next meeting.
  - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says that voting these frameworks through would mean blending the three together, with Framework 2 as a structural support and Framework 3 as operational guidance on how the work gets done
- c. Commissioner Thabiti Brown asks what the proposal actually is.
  - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says it is under Roman Numeral III – Proposed Blended Governance Model. All 3 frameworks will be implemented together. This will be voted in or not voted in at the next meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup>.
- d. Commissioner Gassendina Lubintus clarifies whether or not the DACI model is related specifically to decision-making.
  - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS confirms that it is.

- e. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS asks if the SharePoint is ready to be used yet.
    - i. Staff member Diana Milkey confirms and says that tomorrow she will invite the Commissioners to be able to see it. She also says that she will be adding today's supplementary documents to the section.
  - iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES thanks the ad-hoc governance committee for their work. She suggests trying to use the framework today lightly in order to test it out.
    - 1. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN suggests building it for next meeting so they can model it from the start.
    - 2. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES agrees and requests to amend the next meeting to introduce this framework.
  - iv. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN suggests a template agenda be created that works for this framework and aligns with the proposed cycle of decision making
    - 1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS agrees and says that the governance committee floated the idea of staying permanent to review how the governance structure is or isn't working for the Commission.
    - 2. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN suggests creating this in between this meeting and the meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
  - v. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks Chief of Equity and Inclusion Deidre Travis Brown if this needs to be reviewed by the law department. She confirms it does.
  - vi. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN celebrates that the core of the Commission is prioritized in these frameworks.
    - 1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS suggests having the charge of the commission written at the top of all of the agendas in order to center the priorities of the Commission in all conversations.
    - 2. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE suggests putting all the information for the framework and operations on the website.
  - vii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS thanks commissioners Natassa Mason and Melissa Jackson-Collins
- c. The Commission moves to discussing the three subcommittees
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established at the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting

i. Public Relations

1. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN asks if Public Relations should be more of a community engagement group. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says that he suggested it as an administrative body, similar to the City Solicitor's office
2. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS mentions social media, press releases, targeted communications to City agencies, and public-facing processes governed by the Public Relations committee
  - a. He distinguishes this from Community Engagement by saying the Community Engagement team is more about what's happening with events and planned organized work with the community
3. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES says that she understood the PR team to be working in conjunction with the City to standardize communications and work with implementation
  - a. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN agrees
4. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks if maybe the PR Committee could be designated to the ad-hoc Committee. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says that PR planning is more important to be proactive about
5. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says that City staff are able to have a meeting with no more than three members and a single administrative topic held without public notice
  - a. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES then suggests that a public relations committee might be easier to designate to sporadic meetings like that instead of a regularly meeting group.
6. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks about power structures and role clarity
  - a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says that everyone gets one vote with equal weight. Roles will be laid out by subcommittee members (note-takers,

subcommittee chairs, etc.)

7. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS asks to identify Commissioners might be interested in Public Relations
  - ii. Research
  - iii. Community Engagement
  - iv. Ad Hoc (defined as necessary)
- d. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS suggests waiting until the governance framework is voted on and cleared before establishing the subcommittees. She suggests tabling the discussion until the June meeting and focusing on working through the governance framework.
  - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS agrees.
  - ii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES is concerned by the community response to the Commission, namely that the budget for the FY26 is not being spent. She asks for more clarification and says that the subcommittees would need to work on them, therefore would need to be established.  
Continued under item 4.

### **3. Suggestions of Chairs and Working Group Members**

#### **4. Review of Budget for 2026 & 2027**

- a. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES is concerned by the community response to the Commission, namely that the budget for the FY26 is not being spent. She asks for more clarification and says that the subcommittees would need to work on them, therefore would need to be established.
- b. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that the procurement date for spending the Commission's budget has passed. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks for clarification. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that any item over \$10,000 needs to be put to bid, and that that window for process has passed.
  - i. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks how much is left. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says \$298,000.
  - ii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks by when this should be spent. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says the time to spend this money within the financial cycle has passed.
- c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES expresses concerns that the money not being spent is not clear to the community.
  - i. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS says that in March,

- the Commission voted to hold off on spending the money for the rest of FY26 outside of the Commission
- ii. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says that the Community does not have access to March minutes yet.
  - iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES expresses that, as she understood it, the vote was for not giving money to outside parties
    1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN clarifies that that would still need to be voted on by the Commission. She says that once the Commission votes on something, it needs to be approved by legal and the City Manager.
    2. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks if they have made no decisions by the end of the end of the budget cycle, what would happen to the rest of the funds?
      - a. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN confirms that the remainder of the budget goes into the City budget.
      - b. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES expresses that this is a major concern of hers and the community's
  - iv. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS points out that they would have to come up with a proposal to spend money by next meeting (May 19<sup>th</sup>), and feels that that time would be better spent ironing out governance
  - v. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says that proposals can be voted on at the May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting and push governance until June.
    1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS expresses concern that whatever money is being spent is being spent on organizations that are not being vetted
  - vi. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN reminds everyone that the Commission's charge is to serve American Freedmen in Cambridge and to make recommendations, and that the spending needs to reflect that.
  - vii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS points out that in order to align the proposals with the Ordinance and community, they would need to use the proposed decision-making framework in order to both agree on purchases and vet vendors in less than three weeks and possibly less than three meetings.
  - viii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE says that at the last meeting
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- she suggested making subcommittees, and that the Commission should assign subcommittees without considering the money. She adds that planning on voting on governance between now and next meeting would be the best course of action.
- ix. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE asks how much is approved for next fiscal year.
    - 1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says it has not been approved but it was proposed to be \$300,000.
    - 2. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE asks the Commission to be mindful that no spending may result in less funds for next year.
  - x. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS suggests that the next couple weeks, additional meetings be added to the calendar.
  - xi. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests another working session.
  - xii. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE suggests a list from City Staff for what things might be worth purchasing. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS encourages Commissioners to do the same.
  - xiii. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN proposes that the Commission could potentially contract with someone in the City to deliver a training for Commissioners and potentially for City staff.
    - 1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES says that this was her initial proposal
  - xiv. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks about turnaround time for marketing materials
    - 1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN suggests a brochure, as staff DIANA MILKEY already drafted a version of it already
  - xv. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE mentions other Juneteenth celebrations they could contribute to monetarily
    - 1. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE expresses concern about not funding outside organizations, and that one of COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE's proposals
  - d. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN to clarify the role of mutual aid and the City's legal stance.

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## 5. Adjournment

**Meeting Adjourned**

Chair George Greenidge deemed this meeting of the American Freedman Commission adjourned at 8:48.