

Meeting Date: May 19, 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*

Call to Order:

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

Agenda and Minutes:

- I. **Roll Call for Quorum**
- II. **Call to Order by Chair George Greenidge**
- III. **Public Comment**
 - a. Community Member Kimberley Gonsalves asks about the previously written minutes in December and raises a concern that the Commission does not currently fit the 85% threshold for commissioners who identify as American Freedmen and notes that this seemed to get pushed off. This is noted, but the Commission is not able to answer questions during public comment.
 - b. Community Member Ayesha M. Wilson expresses a concern she had iterated in the last meeting about the remaining budget for FY26 and stresses the need for transparency for budgetary decisions moving forward. She asks for an explanation from the Commission to the community as to why the budget was not used.
- IV. **Consent Agenda**
 - a. Wrong Agenda
 - i. Commissioner Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones asks why the agenda is different than what was discussed.
 - ii. Commissioner George Greenidge says that updates he made to the agenda were not posted by staff.
 1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks what updates he wanted to add.
 2. Chief of Equity and Inclusion Deidre Travis Brown says

the agenda items that are not added are reviews of
Commissioner duties and evaluation of the performance
for the Acting Executive Director

- iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES says that voting on the governance needs to be the primary focus of this meeting today, as they aren't able to move forward without establishing a decision-making framework.
 - iv. Commissioner Jeff Davis agrees and expresses concern that proposals keep being suggested for budget use, but there is no framework for it without voting on a model for governance and decision-making.
 - v. Commissioner George Greenidge says that proposals kept getting "pushed back"
 - vi. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES makes a motion to move the voting from New Business to the first item on the agenda.
 1. Seconded
 2. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN Y
 3. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE Y
 4. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE Y
 5. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS Y
 6. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON Y
 7. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS Y
 8. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS Y
 9. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES Y
 10. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA Y
- b. Minutes Review and Acceptance from last commission meeting on April 28th, 2026
- i. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks if the minutes from the May 6th Governance meeting are here. Staff member Diana Milkey confirms that the Commission does not need to approve working group meeting notes.
 - ii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks to clarify notes about the executive director.
 - iii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS and COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES ask to approve each item individually.
 - iv. Approved unanimously.
 1. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN Y
 2. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE Y
 3. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE Y
 4. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS Y
 5. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON Y

6. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS Y
 7. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS Y
 8. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES Y
 9. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA Y
- c. Minutes Review and Acceptance from last commission working meeting on May 12, 2026
- i. Approved unanimously.
 1. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN Y
 2. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE Y
 3. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE Y
 4. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS Y
 5. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON Y
 6. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS Y
 7. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS Y
 8. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES Y
 9. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA Y
- d. Review and receipt of George Greenidge's Letter
- i. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE submitted a packet to each of the commissioners in person.
 1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS sends it via text message to Thabiti Brown, who is attending the meeting online.
 - ii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks if voting Yea means receipt or agreement. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE clarifies that it means receipt.
 1. Unanimously received, except Thabiti Brown who is online
 - a. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN N
 - b. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE Y
 - c. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE Y
 - d. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS Y
 - e. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON Y
 - f. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS Y
 - g. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS Y
 - h. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES Y
 - i. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA Y
 - iii. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN asks when they would select a new chair. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE points out that it's an agenda item under "New Business"
- e. Review and receipt of Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Booklet (2025)
- i. Commissioner Thabiti Brown asks who hasn't completed this.
_____ ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says she _____

will inform him and the other commissioners after the meeting.

V. Reports

a. Chair's Report

i. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says that he attended the Civic Service event for Commissioners from every City Board and Commission

1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN reports the event as a success and very engaging, mentioning that the Equity and Inclusion Department is planning a similar event in the near future (likely June 2026)

2. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks DIANA MILKEY for her opinion. She states that she helped plan it and it was a great night.

ii. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE brings up three separate Juneteenth events that he emailed to Commissioners earlier in the day.

iii. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE draws commissioners' attention to two documents in his physically distributed packet concerning "white papers" and "serial violations" concerning Open Meeting Law.

iv. Questions for the Chair

1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS asks where the "Frequently Asked Questions" came from.

a. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says he sent these back in December.

b. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS asks again where the questions are from, since there isn't a public relations committee, nor was it approved by the Commission. He wonders who or what body has been asking the questions.

i. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE reiterates that he sent them to Commissioners in December of 2025.

c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks if the questions were solicited or if the Chair decided to write a selection of questions without input from the Commission. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE confirms that he was the one that wrote these questions and answers and states again that he sent them to people back in December.

- b. Acting Executive Director's Report
- i. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that the person who was originally going to be hired for the ED role accepted another position and that she has reopened interviews to new candidates.
1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks if policy work is required for the position. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that it is not a requirement for the position, but she weighs it heavily when discussing qualifications
 2. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks if he needs Commissioners to help support the interview process. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that there will likely be an opportunity for Commissioners to meet final candidates in the future.
 3. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks if the Commission needs to approve the hire. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that recommendations from the Commissioners will be submitted to the City Manager.
 - a. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks how formal the meeting between candidates and Commissioners will be. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says it is informal in that it is not an interview, but formal in that their opinions will be taken into account.
 - b. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE points out that the Ordinance implies that Commissioners have input in the contract. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that since the ED will not report to the Commission itself, they can give input, but likely will not be able to stipulate anything about the ED in the hiring contract, as that is done through the City.
 - c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests an item on the next agenda to clarify the role of the Commission and the influence it has ahead of meeting any of the candidates.
 - d. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks for DIANA MILKEY to copy and paste the following information from the Ordinance:

c. Commissioners' Reports

VI. Old Business

- a. Communications Update on CAFC Written Materials & Website & SharePoint
 - i. DIANA MILKEY has shared the link to the SharePoint website and will be updating with links and documents as created. Commissioners do not have the ability to post but will be able to view all documents. She will send a short guide to Commissioners on how to use it.
 - ii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS requests that DIANA MILKEY send the brochure out to everyone to review. She agrees and will send it to everyone's email and put it on the SharePoint.
 - iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES mentions that because no public relations committee has been established, it would be wise to avoid distributing materials like this before the Commission establishes a strategy for engaging the community.
 - iv. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE draws attention to a report he handed out to the Commission regarding his ideas for how to spend the FY26 budget.
 1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN clarifies that the deadline for FY26 has passed and that funds cannot be allocated.
 2. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES draws attention to the proposal section titled "American Freedmen Commission" from City of Cambridge Planned Budget Book 2027 and asks about the bullet point titled "Confirmed plans to host community education sessions at the 2026 City Juneteenth Celebration." She expresses concern that this is publicly oriented and that the Commission did not agree to that.
 - a. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says she didn't know about this bullet point and that she will be touching base with the budget office to find out where this information is coming from.
 - b. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks to have a conversation about FY26 accomplishments so this can be updated in the budget book
 - v. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN expresses concern that somewhere on the City level they believe that the Commission will be including themselves in Juneteenth and asks why this

ended up in the public book. He also asks how the Commission can “make good” with the public and says that it seems like someone may be reporting business on the Commission without the permission of the Commission.

1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS agrees and points out several inconsistencies with requests for media production and that COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE’s proposals have been brought up for vote multiple times despite the Commission not taking a formal stance on these things. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE denies that he was involved in the misinformation in the budget book.
 2. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES reiterates that voting on the governance needed to be higher priority and that proposals should not be voted on until governance is established. She amends that they should finish Old Business A and move on to Old Business C immediately after.
- b. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says that members of the community and Commissioners have asked him for recordings of the meetings along with the minutes.
- i. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks if this is a requirement of Open Meeting Law. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN confirms is that it is not. She also says that the Commission hasn’t agreed whether or not they want to present themselves publicly with recordings. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE agrees that that needs to be discussed.
 - ii. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN asks ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN if it is common for Cambridge commissions to post minutes. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says it is, but it cannot be posted without approval by the commission.
 - iii. Commissioner Natassa Mason asks if the Commission voted to post their minutes. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN says there wasn’t a vote, but ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN clarifies that it’s standard through the City that minutes are posted, but not videos. Open Meeting Law does not require videos to be posted.
 - iv. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE says that this should be tabled for another time.
 - v. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS clarifies that if there is a public

records request, it can be shared individually. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN confirms.

- c. CAFC Role in Juneteenth for 2026 and 2027 and Vote
 - i. This item is tabled until VII.A is addressed.
- d. Clarification on Budget for 2026 & 2027
 - i. This item is tabled until VII.A is addressed.

VII. **New Business**

- a. Review & Discussion of Ad-Hoc Working Group Governance's Report & Recommendations and Vote
 - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS references slides that he sent out earlier to Commissioners to simplify the blended proposed governance framework. He reads off the slides to refresh the Commissioners on what was discussed at the last working group meeting. He opens up for Commissioner comment.
 - 1. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks if Robert's Rules will be applied to this governance structure. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says no, as they would be transitioning to a more structured style.
 - 2. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks if this is "non-binding" and if it is a suggested guidance or a legal framework, implying that it needs to go through City law offices and staff approval. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that this is not the case, as this would be more along the lines of bylaws, which does not need to be approved by the City.
 - 3. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES notes that this is, in fact, binding, noting that this is a framework for how to engage with each other and community members.
 - 4. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE again expresses concern that this framework would need to be approved. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that once the governance is proposed, she can have the City Solicitor review it.
 - ii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS makes a motion to take a vote. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN clarifies that this is voting in the proposed framework as the governance structure.
 - 1. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks what the vote is on and whether or not they are voting on the blended version. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS confirms that the blended framework is made of proposals from COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS,

- COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE, and himself to focus on eliminating the blind spots between each
2. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS suggests walking through
 - iii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE motions to vote on the proposed framework
 1. Seconded
 - a. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE – Abstain
 - b. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA – Y
 - c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES – Y
 - d. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS – Y
 - e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS – Y
 - f. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON – Y
 - g. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS – Y
 - h. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – Y
 - i. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN – Y
 2. The motion passes.
 - b. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES motions to extend the meeting until 9:00 PM.
 - a. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE – Y
 - b. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA – Y
 - c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES – Y
 - d. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS – Y
 - e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS – Y
 - f. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON – Y
 - g. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS – Y
 - h. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – Y
 - i. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN – Y
 - c. Discussion & Clarification of Policy Regarding the General Public Attendance for In-Person Meetings for Public Comment
 - i. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS asks how the Commission is to respond to Public Comment and how to address the public’s concerns
 - ii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS suggests that responding to public comment be designated by an agenda item at the following meeting
 1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that they can’t be answered at the meeting they comment at, but it can be discussed at future meetings
 - iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES asks about a living document to catalogue the community response.
 1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN

- suggests curating the FAQ's in order to build up the answers to common questions as a group
2. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE asks when this could get discussed. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that it could go to a working group or on a future agenda.
- iv. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS expresses concern about persistent agenda items that had already been voted on, and asks what the best method to direct people to answers would be.
 1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN suggests social media, website, constant contact, and other communications ideas
 - v. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS brings up that the single Commission's voice hasn't been established and neither has a cohesive way of engaging with the public. He expresses concern that members of the public ask about concerns that have already been voted on. He suggests a question box or form that allows everyone to review comments ahead of time and structure responses while prioritizing moving as a body.
 - vi. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES wants to clarify if these questions will be answered at formal meetings or if they will be answered through methods with the Community Engagement working group. She also asks to consider why and how people have access to information related to the commission.
 - vii. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE asks for clarification whether or not public are allowed to come to the meetings in person. A few commissioners say that they hadn't said either way.
 1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES points out that COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE has said that members of the community have been asking him for information about the meetings. He denies that this is happening. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES points out that he just mentioned two community members by name who had reached out to him.
 2. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES says that there needs to be a single answer to community questions so the Commission can reply as a body and not as individuals.
 3. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON adds that when

community members speak with her, she has noticed that the public does not know that this Commission is focused on descendants of chattel slavery specifically. She emphasizes a need for the public to understand that definition.

- viii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS mentions that discussing a public engagement policy closer.
- ix. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS motions to adopt COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS's recommendation of having a public comment inbox on the public website. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN suggests putting this information on socials so the public can review.
 1. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests the Community Engagement working group can engage with this first
 2. Seconded
 - a. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE – Y
 - b. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA – Y
 - c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES – Y
 - d. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS – Y
 - e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS – Y
 - f. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON – Y
 - g. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS – Y
 - h. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – Muted
 - i. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN – Y
- x. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS motions to designate the Community Engagement Working Group as responders for the public comment.
 1. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN says that staff would post the form, funnel the questions and comments to the Working Group, and then answered.
 2. Seconded
 - a. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE – Y
 - b. COMMISSIONER KASHISH BASTOLA – Y
 - c. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES – Y
 - d. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS – Y
 - e. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS – Y
 - f. COMMISSIONER NATASSA MASON – Y
 - g. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS – Y
 - h. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Abstain
 - i. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE – Y

- j. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN – Y
- xi. Motion to extend the meeting by 15 minutes
 - 1. Seconded
 - 2. Passed
- xii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests using the form to collect information for the Community Engagement Committee and not give a timeline for response yet.
- d. Nominations and Vote on CAFC Working Group Members and Nominations and Vote on CAFC Working Group Chairs (Chairs' names are bolded)
 - i. Research (voted in unanimously)
 - 1. George Greenidge
 - 2. Kashish Bastola
 - 3. Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones
 - 4. Thabiti Brown**
 - 5. Jeff Davis
 - ii. Community Engagement (voted in unanimously)
 - 1. Gassendina Lubintus
 - 2. Melissa Jackson-Collins**
 - 3. Xenia Bhembe
 - 4. Kwame Dance
 - iii. Ad-Hoc Governance (previously established)
 - 1. George Greenidge
 - 2. Natassa Mason
 - 3. Jeff Davis
 - 4. Melissa Jackson-Collins
- e. Vote on Pending Proposals
- f. Nominations and Vote on CAFC Chair's Position
 - i. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN suggests his vote for the chair of the research committee is dependent on who is going to be voted in for the Chair of the Commission. He conditionally accepts, and is voted in as Chair of the Research Subcommittee unanimously
 - ii. Nominations
 - 1. Jeff Davis
 - 2. Xenia Bhembe (declined)
 - 3. Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones (declined)
 - iii. Jeff Davis has been voted in unanimously as the new Chair of the Cambridge American Freedmen Commission.
- g. Nominations and Vote on CAFC Vice Chair's Position
 - i. Cheyenne Wyzard Jones asks to keep her position as Vice Chair.
Voted unanimously.

- h. Suggested Upcoming Meeting Schedule
 - i. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES suggests a working session for each of the Subcommittees
 - ii. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS suggests a meeting for next Tuesday, May 26 with time split between each subcommittee.
 - iii. COMMISSIONER CHEYENNE WYZZARD-JONES and COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS will set an agenda and send it out.
- VIII. **Items Not Anticipated by the Chair**
- IX. **Events & Announcements**
 - a. This is Kashish Bastola's last meeting as Commissioner. Thank you for your service, Kashish!
- X. **Adjournment**

Meeting Adjourned

Chair Jeff Davis deemed this meeting of the American Freedman Commission adjourned at 9:34