

City of Cambridge American Freedmen Commission Regular Meeting

Meeting Date: June 16, 2026

Attendance:

☐ Akiba, Sukia
☐ ~~Brown, Thabiti~~
☐ ~~Collins, Melissa~~
☐ ~~Dance, Kwame~~
☐ ~~Davis, Jeff~~

☐ ~~GREENIDGE JR.,~~
George
☐ ~~Bhembe, Xenia~~
☐ ~~Lubintus, Gassendina~~
☐ Mason, Natassa
☐ Wyzzard 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:

Interim Executive Director Deidre Travis Brown called this meeting of the American Freedman Commission to order at 6:47.

Agenda and Minutes:

1. Moment to Remember: Reflect (stories & perspective) - 5 Mins
2. Moment to Connect: Community Voice and Understanding (Public Comment)
 - a. No public comment was offered.

Prime Objective: Our Work for the Day - Vote on next 30 Days Actions

3. Vote to Approve Meeting Minutes
 - a. May 19, 2026 – Regular Meeting
 - i. Motion to accept from Kwame Dance
 1. Seconded
 - ii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
 - iii. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
 - iv. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. - A
 - v. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
 - vi. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE - Y
 - vii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - Y
 - viii. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN - Y
 - b. June 2, 2026 – Regular Meeting
 - i. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. asks where the

“recommendations” in the minutes came from and notes that he believes the meeting was deliberation in “double quorum” which is against Open Meeting Law.

1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS reminds COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. that the City Solicitor’s Office cleared the structure of this meeting ahead of time and that no violations of Open Meeting Law were done.
2. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. says that a different process of needing to “print out a handout” was not followed and therefore he will abstain from voting.

ii. Motion to accept from Jeff Davis

1. Seconded

- iii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS - Y
- iv. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS - Y
- v. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. - A
- vi. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS - Y
- vii. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE - Y
- viii. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE - A
- ix. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN – Y
- x. Passed

c. June 11, 2026 – Community Outreach Subcommittee Meeting

- i. This will be tabled as the subcommittee chair was not able to send it in time for review, so this will be approved at the next regular meeting.

4. Subcommittee Insights: What have we learned and where we might act

a. Community Engagement Subcommittee Recommendations

- i. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS sets the focus as the definition of the term “American Freedmen.” The subcommittee decided that the brochures will not be printed in FY2026 due to the importance of needing to identify specific verbiage.
- ii. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS cites two reports that will be reviewed to make sure the definition the body comes up with is both legally sound and compliant with the definition that other Freedmen institutions have used
- iii. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN asks if there will be definitions to choose from or if it will be one single definition
 1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS says that there will be two definitions, one that is more complete and one that is shorter

- iv. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS asks what the purpose of defining “American Freedmen”
 - 1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS says that this is the basics of the work the Commission is charged to do and identifies the people that the Commission will serve as laid out in the Ordinance
 - 2. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS expresses concern that research is holding up other plans from the Commission. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS says COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE and COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE redesigned the brochure
- v. Brochure Redesign
 - 1. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS notes that content needs to be reviewed now that COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE has redesigned the brochure, but the definition is important to establish the content
 - 2. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE notes that the definition of American Freedmen specifically needs to be outlined before the Commission is able to engage with American Freedmen or other members of the Black diaspora. She suggests using both designs of the brochure for different purposes
 - a. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. notes that some non-profits use different types of marketing for different audiences
 - b. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says this is a good idea, but wants to focus on singular branding first and then tailoring it to audiences after
 - 3. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE shows the three logos he generated using AI for feedback.
 - a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS mentions that the Harvard buildings in the logo may confuse people regarding affiliation
 - b. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS notes that her favorite is the one that includes the Black Heritage flag colors
 - c. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. cites Frederick Rindge’s legacy and says that his connection to Cambridge City Hall warrants its inclusion on the logo somehow

- d. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN expresses that he likes the logos but suggests colors from the pan-African flag, noting that he is struggling with having it be red, white, and blue
 - i. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS notes that one of the designers of the Black American Freedmen used red, white, and blue to emphasize that Freedmen are Americans and created this country as much as anyone. She also notes that the pan-African flag might draw focus away from the Ordinance centered around American Freedmen specifically.
 - ii. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. says that he believes that the commission should include more people from the community outside of the Freedmen identity and that the work can't happen without consulting community members outside of the Freedmen identity. He suggests bringing issues to a hearing and asking community members to weigh in on decisions.
 - iii. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says it's a good idea, but the agreed upon relational equity governance model should take precedence.
- vi. Swag
 - 1. Swag for 2026 will be more generic and the specific later
 - 2. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE sends some more generated logos and designs for review.
 - a. STAFF ASSISTANT DIANA MILKEY suggests taking caution while using AI to avoid public perception issues. Some commissioners agree.
 - b. COMMISSIONER KWAME DANCE suggests using the AI generated logos and designs as jumping off points and suggests giving them as mock-ups to a local artist. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS agrees.
 - 3. COMMISSIONER MELISSA JACKSON-COLLINS asks for the commissioners to send feedback on the logos or brochure design to her. STAFF ASSISTANT DIANA MILKEY will put the logos and designs on the

SharePoint site to view.

- b. Research Subcommittee Recommendations
 - i. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN notes that the research subcommittee has not had an official subcommittee meeting yet and reviews what was discussed at the previous meeting re: possible expenditures and website updates they are hoping to do.
 - ii. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEIDRE TRAVIS BROWN mentions that she will connect with the subcommittee re: specific questions and updates she has.
- c. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN asks about the upcoming meeting schedule.
 - i. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says that there is hopefully going to be two meetings per month and subcommittees can meet however many times they want as long as it's duly noticed
 - ii. COMMISSIONER THABITI BROWN asks COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. if he is part of the research subcommittee. STAFF ASSISTANT DIANA MILKEY confirms he is per the meeting minutes from 05.19

5. Full Body Vote

6. Opportunities and Insights Across the City

- a. Events
 - i. Juneteenth Celebration is on Thursday for the City staff from 12-2, Juneteenth itself is on Friday, and Pride event is on Saturday around City Hall
 - ii. The City Juneteenth Parade is on Friday the 19th starting at City Hall on Mass. Ave.
 - iii. COMMISSIONER GASSENDINA LUBINTUS is invited to the World of Chibuzo reading of Fredrick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" and offers for the Commission to come on Saturday June 20th
 - iv. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. mentions the City dance party on June 26th
 - v. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. brings up the story of "Phyllis, Mark, and Phoebe" as Cambridge's role in slavery – in 1757, Cambridge burned two enslaved women at the stake at a place called The Gallows.
 - 1. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS asks if this is a book. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. says it's an event at the library talking about it recently and mentions that he wants to try and get a commemorative marker or something.
 - 2. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS asks if there can be

some kind of newsletter or way of compiling these pieces of history so it can be kept at the forefront of the work.

- b. COMMISSIONER XENIA BHEMBE notes that the Community Outreach Subcommittee discussed public comments that require addressing – nothing has been finalized, but it's being worked on

7. Chair Meeting Summary & Next Steps

- a. COMMISSIONER JEFF DAVIS says that he will be at the Juneteenth parade and invites and encourages everyone present to come – City Hall at 9:30 AM on Friday. He requests anyone attending to message him so they can connect.
- b. The next full commission meeting will be on July 21st in person from 6:30 – 8:30
- c. The next Community Outreach Subcommittee Meeting on July 9th
- d. COMMISSIONER GEORGE GREENIDGE JR. requests that STAFF ASSISTANT DIANA MILKEY send calendar invites for every subcommittee meeting. She confirms that they are all posted on the SharePoint.

Meeting Adjourned

Chair Jeff Davis deemed this meeting of the American Freedman Commission adjourned at 8:17.