

CAMBRIDGE AMERICAN FREEDMEN COMMISSION

Community Outreach Working Session — Meeting Minutes

Date:	June 9, 2026
Time:	6:48 PM – 8:37 PM (ET)
Format:	Virtual (Zoom)
Prepared by:	Melissa Jackson Collins, Community Outreach Chair/Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Jackson Collins called the Community Outreach Subcommittee meeting to order at approximately 6:48 p.m. Roll call was conducted, and all Subcommittee members were present.

Attendees:

- Melissa Jackson Collins — Community Outreach Chair / Commissioner (Facilitator)
- Dr. Xenia Bembe — Community Outreach Committee Member / Commissioner
- Dr. Kwame Dance — Community Outreach Committee Member / Commissioner
- Gassendina Lubintus — Community Outreach Committee Member / Commissioner
- Deidre Travis Brown — Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer / Advisor

A quorum of the Outreach Subcommittee was present.

2. Meeting Objectives

The Subcommittee reviewed the agenda, which included:

- Future meeting schedule
- Draft outreach language and a working definition of "American Freedmen"
- Brochure redesign
- Community comment form
- Website audit planning

3. Meeting Schedule

Members discussed the frequency and scheduling of future Subcommittee meetings.

The Subcommittee discussed meeting monthly virtually (Zoom) and identified the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. as the preferred schedule, subject to future adjustment based on member availability. Members also discussed holding additional meetings, as needed, to address time-sensitive matters.

The next Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for July 9, 2026.

4. Administrative Coordination

Members discussed exchanging contact information for administrative and scheduling purposes. Members were reminded that deliberation regarding Commission business must occur only during properly posted public meetings in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Members also discussed establishing a SharePoint folder for Subcommittee materials.

5. Draft American Freedmen Definition

The Subcommittee reviewed multiple draft definitions intended to support future community outreach materials. Discussion focused on historical, legal, and policy considerations related to terminology, lineage, and eligibility.

Draft materials reviewed included:

- A framework prepared by Commissioner Jackson Collins addressing historical and legal context.
- A shorter draft definition prepared with the assistance of an artificial intelligence tool for discussion purposes.

Members discussed developing language that is clear, historically accurate, legally supportable, and appropriate for future consideration by the full Commission.

Topics discussed included:

- Terminology describing individuals affected by emancipation and Reconstruction.
- Whether the definition should emphasize legal and lineage-based criteria rather than racial terminology.
- Historical treatment of Native American Freedmen associated with the Five Civilized Tribes.

- Whether additional research regarding the Lumbee Tribe should be conducted before any proposed language is presented to the full Commission.
- The importance of supporting any proposed definition with historical and legal research.

Members also discussed the possibility of presenting multiple draft versions of the definition to the full Commission for consideration.

During the discussion, members referenced information received from State Representative Brandi Fluker-Reed regarding terminology used in pending legislation. Members discussed that information as one resource to consider while continuing to develop draft language.

No final definition was adopted.

6. Outreach Materials

Members reviewed draft brochure and logo concepts intended for future outreach materials.

Discussion included brochure layout, imagery, branding, and potential revisions to improve clarity and public accessibility. Members also discussed continuing design work while development of the proposed definition continues.

Members discussed a proposal to delay brochure printing until the full Commission has had an opportunity to consider a proposed definition.

7. Commission Update

Members discussed providing a brief update to the full Commission regarding the Subcommittee's ongoing work and anticipated timeline. Members also discussed future development of outreach materials and promotional items.

8. Next Steps

Members identified the following next steps:

- Continue research related to the proposed American Freedmen definition.
- Refine draft outreach language for future discussion.
- Continue brochure and logo development.
- Establish a SharePoint folder for Subcommittee materials.
- Prepare materials for discussion at a future meeting of the full Commission.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Jackson Collins adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:37 p.m.