

CAMBRIDGE AMERICAN FREEDMEN COMMISSION

Community Outreach Subcommittee Working Session — Meeting Notes

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Jackson Collins called the Community Outreach Working Meeting to order at approximately 6:48 PM. Attendance roll call was conducted.

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 Community Outreach Subcommittee was present

2. MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Align on working group meeting cadence
- Discuss key outreach language (American Freedmen definition)
- Discuss brochure redesign and content
- Discuss the Community Comment Form
- Discuss a website audit plan

3. WORKING GROUP MEETING CADENCE

Discussion & Decision:

- Members discussed a proposed schedule for future Community Outreach Working Sessions.
- The proposed schedule was monthly meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM, held virtually. Members also discussed potential scheduling conflicts beginning in September and the possibility of additional meetings when necessary to address time-sensitive work.

- The subcommittee will revisit the schedule as needed and follow the applicable meeting notice and posting requirements for future meetings.

4. GROUP COMMUNICATION & CONTACT INFORMATION

- Members discussed methods for coordinating working-group materials and maintaining contact information.
- The subcommittee also discussed creating a designated SharePoint folder for working-group materials. Materials will be provided through the established City process for posting and maintaining Commission records.

5. AMERICAN FREEDMEN DEFINITION & OUTREACH LANGUAGE

- Members reviewed draft language concerning the definition of “American Freedmen” for potential use in public-facing materials.
- The discussion included historical, legal, and community considerations related to the definition, including the scope of the population described in the City's ordinance.
- A draft definition was discussed during the meeting:
- “Descendants of U.S. freed persons of color and individuals whose freedom was secured by the abolition of chattel slavery or from the Five Civilized Tribes (Chickasaw, Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee Creek, Seminole) in the United States between the 14th and 19th centuries.”
- Members discussed the importance of using clear language that is consistent with the City's ordinance and supported by appropriate historical and legal research.
- The draft language was not adopted as the official definition of American Freedmen. Further research and review will occur before any proposed language is presented to the full Commission.
- Members also discussed whether additional historical research was needed regarding other populations and historical circumstances. Further information will be gathered for consideration.

6. AMERICAN FREEDMEN COMMISSION BROCHURE

- Members discussed the status of the Commission's brochure and the need to ensure that public-facing materials accurately reflect any definition ultimately considered by the full Commission.
- Members expressed support for continuing brochure design work while delaying printing until the definition and related content have undergone additional review and final approval by the full Commission.
- The brochure design was reviewed, including layout, imagery, color scheme, and cultural and historical representation.

- Commissioner Bembe will provide the current design to the appropriate City staff for further design review.

7. AMERICAN FREEDMEN LOGO

- Commissioner Dance presented a draft logo concept for discussion.
- Members provided feedback regarding the use of Cambridge landmarks and the visual connection to the Commission's work. Additional design concepts may be developed for future consideration.
- No final logo was identified during the session.

8. ACTION ITEMS & NEXT STEPS

- **Commissioner Jackson Collins:** Circulate relevant working materials to subcommittee members.
- **Commissioner Dance:** Gather available research regarding definitions of American Freedmen and share relevant materials with the subcommittee.
- **Commissioner Dance:** Share the draft logo concept and related design information.
- **Commissioner Bembe:** Provide the brochure mock-up to the appropriate City staff for design review.
- **Advisor Brown:** Coordinate with appropriate City staff (Legal Dept) regarding review of the proposed definition and related materials.
- **Subcommittee members:** Review materials in advance of the next noticed working session.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:37 PM. Commissioner Jackson Collins thanked all members for their time and contributions.