



**EVENTS, EXHIBITS, AND TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Boston City Hall Boston, MA, 02201

Held virtually via Zoom

FEBRUARY 21, 2024

Commissioners Present: *Suzanne Taylor, Dr. Noelle Trent, Fairies Gray, Juan Eusebio, Celia Richa, Nat Sheidley, Sam Tully-Chambers, Konah Brownell for Jay Ash*

Commissioners Absent: *Eric Hanson-Plass, Imari Jefferies, Kara Elliott-Ortega, John Borders IV, Dave O'Donnell, Juan Lopez, Kyera Singleton*

Staff Present: *Genesis Pimentel, Commemoration Commission Manager; Murray Miller, Director of Historic Preservation*

A full recording of the meeting is available on boston.gov/commemoration-commission

SESSION BEGINS - 6:00 PM

I. WELCOME

- a. Commemoration Commission Manager Genesis Pimentel welcomed attendees.
- b. Commissioners introduced themselves and expressed their interest in historic preservation.

II. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Selecting Co-Chairs: Commissioner Suzanne Taylor and Commissioner Imari Jeffries self-nominated prior to this meeting. During the meeting, the co-chair selection was put to a vote, and both Suzanne Taylor and Imari Jeffries were unanimously voted in as co-chairs.

III. SCOPE, TIMELINE, AND DEFINING OF EET SUBCOMMITTEE

- a. Genesis Pimentel reviewed the tasks of the subcommittee as outlined in the Ordinance and provided an update on what the City of Boston might be doing for 2026.
- b. Chair Suzanne Taylor asked questions on which departments are engaging with the Commemoration Commission and asked if there would be more staff members for the Commission as the Ordinance states there will be at least two staff members.
- c. Genesis Pimentel discussed that she was meeting with the Office of Economic Opportunity and that there hadn't been meaningful engagement with other departments until recently.



- d. Director Murray Miller discussed that Genesis Pimentel is the person coordinating the Commission and that there's been some indication that Murray Miller would be the other person working on the Commission but it had not been fleshed out, and there isn't any plan or budget to hire new staff though it had been discussed in budget deliberations.
- e. Dr. Noelle Trent stated that outside of just Genesis Pimentel working on the Commission, there doesn't seem to be many tools at the Commission's disposal because without funding efforts from the City, the proposals and plans the Commissioners come up with cannot be executed. She also highlighted the issue with putting the onus of celebration onto neighborhoods and communities whose systemic issues are supposed to be addressed is potentially very inappropriate.
- f. Director Murray Miller responded that based on what the Ordinance sets out to accomplish, there is a cost element for both monetary and labor resources. He was under the impression that the budget for that would be introduced in FY 25 but circumstances had changed, but he is nonetheless waiting to hear back in April. Murray Miller discussed his understanding that OHP would have a smaller role in funding projects than other departments with better tools and funding at their disposal.
- g. Commissioner Sam Tully-Chambers asked about reaching out to private organizations for funding. Genesis Pimentel discussed that she is under the impression that this is something she and City partners such as OEOI and TSE are thinking through. She discussed that there were also grant programs for funding and that we should look into nonprofit organizations' work. She stated that City partners would like to build on what is already going to be happening for the 250th and that it has the potential to be irresponsible but that Boston is very behind on 250th commemorations.
- h. Commissioner Nat Sheidley elaborated on the points raised by Genesis Pimentel that if funding is so limited, the most the Commission could reasonably do is to coordinate activities that the communities and institutions they are connected to are planning to undertake, so any fundraising the Commission does is actually creating a competition for funding. It would be difficult for those organizations to accomplish tasks if the City also fundraises with those funders. He believes that we should take this in two phases, 2026 and 2030, where in 2030 there would be more ability to create mandates for future funding. For 2026, he emphasized that there would be a need for consolidation and cohesion to amplify other voices.
- i. Commissioner Celia Richa commented that a good starting point would be taking an inventory of what's already being planned, and then fundraise based on what the City would need to do to supplement those efforts. The City would need to have a comprehensive deck on exactly what it's asking for and why and that we



are not up against just organizations but other municipalities in the Commonwealth. She asked if the City had been in touch with Lexington and Concord, as an example.

- j. Chair Suzanne Taylor responded that there have not yet been any requests from the City and the State will be accepting donations through partnerships.
- k. There was a discussion about the Timelines, Archives, and Curricula subcommittee and how they will be interacting with this subcommittee.
- l. Commissioner Noelle Trent mentioned that many organizations haven't started planning yet and that the sole focus should not be on 250 commemoration only. She suggested the creation of an outline of the Boston 250 experience in terms of geography and time. She suggested ways to bolster already existing annual celebrations like Carnival. She wants us to think through, for example, if adding to Lunar New Year is appropriate or if communities would rather celebrate on other dates for any reason. That way, she stated, communities can see and understand themselves alongside something like Paul Revere's ride.
- m. Chair Suzanne Taylor agreed that every single neighborhood should have its own celebration.

IV. IMPORTANT TOPICS TO DISCUSS

- a. Commissioner Nat Sheidley shared a resource from the American Association of State and Local History on how to leverage the 250th for more than just 1776 and talk about what's unfinished.
- b. Genesis Pimentel discussed some of what was done for Boston Revolution 200 and how it could be expanded upon to be more inclusive of the histories in Boston that are not often discussed and which social issues that Commission focused on, such as a childcare center in City Hall.
- c. Commissioner Faries Gray mentioned that Tall Ship, for example, is a painful history for Boston and Massachusetts' Indigenous communities. Fairies noted that if Boston celebrates certain things, it should be ready for protests.
- d. Genesis Pimentel responded that commemoration should not inherently be celebratory and while Boston was during that time, she mentioned the protests against Queen Elizabeth during her visit for Revolution 200 during the Troubles and conflicts in Northern Ireland, and how those protests are more in line with the values of the Revolution because it showed that citizens were politically engaged.
- e. Commissioner Noelle Trent discussed how historians would like to move away from how Rev200 was handled and that commemoration not celebration should and will be a more inclusive and intentional approach. She also discussed that 2026 will put Boston in the international spotlight as many people will be traveling for not only 250 but the World Cup and since many people may never come back after that, we should think about how what we do will be a statement



and will leave a lasting impression on visitors. Commissioner Nat Sheidley expressed the importance of also focusing on Boston residents.

- f. Commissioner Juan Eusebio asked who would be responsible for fundraising and Commissioner Trent asked who was planning July 4, 2026.
- g. Genesis Pimentel responded that as far as she knows, the Commission is tasked with planning July 4, 2026 in tandem with OEOI, TSE, ONS, MOAC, and other departments. But since many of those departments have someone sitting on the Commission, she is led to believe that the planning will fall on the Commission and execution may be somewhere else.
- h. Commissioner Faries Gray asked if 250 is one day or if it's a year long celebration.
- i. Genesis Pimentel responded that previous commemorations were a year long series of events, but with the sheer amount of labor in pulling something like that off requires City, State, and outside partnership.
- j. Discussions were held to honor recent but important contributions from residents of all backgrounds.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION ON RELEVANT TOPICS

- a. The discussion revolved around seeking input from the administration and city council for the commission's activities. There was a focus on the critical period of 2025 and the potential launch events, particularly around April to June. Coordination with the Conquer Museum and organizations like Old North Church and Paul Revere House was emphasized for collaborative efforts. Additionally, the idea of reenacting historic events such as the Midnight Ride was proposed. Concerns were raised about the practicality of starting the ride at midnight.
- b. The meeting discussed various ideas to enhance the experience of Paul Revere's ride in 2025, including live streaming, creating a social media campaign, involving businesses for sponsorships, and incorporating artistic representations from different neighborhoods. There was also a suggestion to have people write and recite poems about Paul Revere's ride, as well as creating themed cocktails in restaurants across the city. The importance of not competing with existing entities responsible for the historical narrative was emphasized.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. There were no public comments.

VII. ADJOURNMENT - 7:50 PM

- a. Commissioner Nat Sheidley motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- b. Commissioner Juan Eusebio seconded.