



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

Boston City Hall Boston, MA, 02201

Held virtually via Zoom

APRIL 16, 2024

Commissioners Present: *Suzanne Taylor, Imari Jefferies, Celia Richa, Nat Sheidley, Eric Hanson-Plass, John Borders IV, Konah Brownell/Jay Ash, Juan Lopez, Kyera Singleton, Kara Elliott-Ortega, Dave O'Donnell, Noelle Trent*

Commissioners Absent: *Sam Tully-Chambers, Juan Eusebio, Fairies Gray*

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.

II. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Meeting minutes were approved.

III. NORTH END BLACK HERITAGE TRAIL

- a. Commissioner Noelle Trent discussed that the Museum of African American History was approached by a North End resident about extending the Black Heritage Trail into the North End. The extension included 12 sites. The work of putting everything together was done by a group of residents. Commissioner Trent raised the consideration that there may be other communities who have begun to think through the sites that matter to them. She mentioned that someone talked to her about the Women's Heritage Trail and how it was impacted by COVID. Commissioner Trent asked if the subcommittee or Commission should be investigating other areas of the City and marking them appropriately, especially with the 250th approaching.
 - i. Commissioner Dave O'Donnell asked if the Zipporah Atkins House was on the trail because there is a group working on building replica structures, which is great for an immersive experience.
 - ii. Genesis Pimentel discussed that the Highland Park ACD was interested in doing a walking tour of historic and cultural sites, and that may be a way of engaging neighborhoods and communities.



- iii. Chair Imari Jeffries asked if this subcommittee or Commission had the power to validate things like tours. He expressed the interest in thinking through the process of approval and what the process would be to bring forth ideas they hear.
- iv. Genesis Pimentel read the ordinance and opined that it is definitely under the subcommittee's purview to find trails, bring them forward, and give them to relevant departments, which could include Neighborhood Services, Arts & Culture, or Tourism, Sports, and Entertainment.
- v. Chair Suzanne Taylor discussed the Freedom Trail Commission and how the State governs lengths of trails (no less than 12 sites) and which sites go on them. Because there are at least 12 sites on the trail Commissioner Trent presented, Chair Taylor thinks there is potential for a community process to exist when creating trails.
 1. Commissioner Nat Sheidley raised the concern that the process might be complicated since Boston has only two institutional trails functioning with a quasi-governmental configuration while the rest aren't. He stated that this subcommittee could play a role in stimulating new trails with constituent input. He noted that there is no official City of Boston historic landmark program and it might be something the subcommittee recommends. He gave context into the fact that Revolutionary Spaces was formed from a program that did run a historic marker program. He stated that if one of the charges of the Commission is to complete a citywide historic resources survey, then it makes sense for this subcommittee to elevate its visibility through this kind of marketing. He informed the subcommittee that the Bostonian Society raised and held the funds for that historic marker program, but there were maintenance costs.
- b. Commissioner Trent proposed coming up with a process for people to submit ideas, regardless of how well-constructed an idea is, so that the subcommittee can at least see where the community knowledge holders are. She also stated that people will want both physical markers and digital ways to explore the City, especially as tourists will be arriving. She explained that D.C. has a large sign that will show you important cultural and historic places, so Boston might want to do something similar in its neighborhoods.
- c. Commissioner Kyera Singleton discussed the [Historic Resource Survey of Black Boston](#) done in 2002. It focused on Beacon Hill, but she mentioned utilizing early histories created for this trail since they have research already on them. She discussed making sure that communities actually have a seat at the table is crucial, so there needs to be a rubric for how the Commission engages since



many of the places they are introducing have been introduced elsewhere and rejected.

- d. Commissioner Juan Lopez discussed the creation of a Latino trail. He mentioned that while the trail might not have as much breadth the farther back you go, Latinos were still here. He continued, discussing the growth and impact of the Latino community in Boston within the last century has been deeply felt. He brought up the Ted Williams Tunnel, and how Ted Williams and Anthony Quinn were Latino men who felt the need to hide their backgrounds. There is history behind Puerto Rican migration, Central American migration and their settling in East Boston, Commissioner Lopez pointed out. He would like the Commission to consider statues and trails for this community.
 - i. Genesis Pimentel added that there is a good opportunity to talk about the Caribbean community in Boston as a base because of how well it branches out due to its diversity and history. She elaborated that the Caribbean encompasses the black community, the Latino community, and more. She mentioned that Boston has a significant Haitian community and that [Deyaha Moussa](#), taken from Africa to Haiti having witnessed the Haitian Revolution, was enslaved by the Perkins family and brought to Boston where he is now buried. She stated there was also a need to highlight the Malcolm X-Ella Little-Collins House as well as the mosque he was based at. She discussed that constituents have stated they'd like to see special 250/400 plaques, and that could be a product of this Commission.
- e. Chair Jeffries expressed that he did not think the Commission would do the execution of the ideas and thought we would validate things that are in place because the charge of the Commission is confusing.
- f. Commission Kara Elliott-Ortega seconded his concern. She also raised the concern that there needs to be a timeline established because conversations around funding and the material questions of execution matter. She supported opening a call to understand what already exists and potentially have it mapped. She stated that this would help with understanding the category of the institution or group undertaking a project and then help the Commission with supporting those projects ethically and equitably. She noted that there isn't a transparent way to explain the distribution of resources and thinks that there needs to be some kind of entity or body that reviews all kinds of significant events, ideas, people, places, objects to help recommend plaques and trails.
 - i. Genesis Pimentel discussed that the ordinance was tricky in that it says the subcommittees will produce recommendations but that the Commission is tasked with developing and executing a plan, which to her sounds like subcommittees recommend something while the Commission



will take those to relevant departments or to a separate entity, especially with a lack of funding.

- g. Commissioner Dave O'Donnell contributed that the State is having similar conversations about whether they are recommending or executing or just fundraising and marketing.
- h. Chair Jeffries discussed how Philadelphia 250 has a staff of 8 people, a fundraising committee, and actionable items, and how since we do not have that, we should look to other entities with plans to help us. Commissioner Trent recommended looking at New Jersey and Virginia as well.

IV. BOSTON 400 LOGO/BRANDING/MARKETING

- a. Genesis Pimentel shared ideas she had for the Boston Rev 250 and Boston 400 branding.
- b. Commissioner Sheidley stated that the Commission needed to discuss what it would like to communicate with its branding prior to creating a graphic concept. For that reason, he indicated that having someone who has experience in branding should help facilitate a discussion about the core concepts the Commission is tied to, then they should create a logo on the Commission's behalf.
- c. Chair Taylor discussed bringing the logos to the larger Commission and focusing on a website.
- d. Commissioner Sheidley asked if the Commission has the authority to define the brand or if that falls on the City. Chair Taylor replied that she thinks it belongs with the City.
- e. Chair Jeffries clarified that the chairs were thinking of the opportunity to engage a creative agency, but knowing there were no resources, started to question if the Commission even has the authority to suggest these ideas.
- f. Commissioner John Borders asked if it would make sense to align with the State and its visual brand or if the City should move in a different direction without competing with the state. Chair Jeffries replied that it seems still to be determined, but that if the Commission had resources, this subcommittee would prefer the logo to really match the values and actions behind the Commission. Commissioner Borders asked for a timeline.
- g. Genesis Pimentel stated that she had to write an update in July and that she knows certain neighborhoods are getting activated and would love to be under Boston branding. She stated the next full Commission meet would happen in July and asked if that would be a good deadline.
- h. Commissioner Sheidley asked if we needed to advocate for resources. Genesis Pimentel stated she would introduce this idea to the Office of Historic Preservation to see if this is something that could be funded under contracted services but expressed doubt since those funds are allocated to study reports.



- i. Commissioner Trent stated that it should be moved to a vote at the April meeting and state that we would like funding, and then send the votes and its write up straight to the Mayor's Office and City Council and see what happens.
- j. Commissioner Lopez added that now is the time to look for funding since it is budget season. He asked: Is there anything in any department's budget to deal with this?
 - i. Commissioner Borders stated that since he oversees Tourism, Sports, and Entertainment, this would be something that falls under his department, but they have not yet been able to allocate funds appropriately. He stated he will testify in July and currently has broad strokes for 250/400 but has nothing specifically advocating for a 250 budget since it is a larger conversation and advocated for public-private partnerships. He finished by stating that the City has the resources and that the City needs to do more.
 1. Commissioner Lopez affirmed that what Commissioner Borders stated was helpful. He wanted clarification on whether the Commission is able to reach out and get sponsors. He expanded by stating that those donations have to go through Council whereas departments have funds already earmarked. He asked: Can we hold events? He stated he would like a clear indication into what it is the subcommittees and the Commission can and cannot do.
 2. Commissioner Borders responded that it is easier to get funding when there are plans in place, and then one can lean on the Mayor's Office, Councilors, and calling others for sponsorship, which is different than getting money earmarked for things without knowing its utilization.
- k. Commissioner Trent raised the concern that the role of the State Commission is very clear that it does not do financing or fundraising around money. She asked, for Boston's Commission: Is there a mandate for fundraising? She expressed that she was not under the impression that that was a role here and that the subcommittee focused on planning. She stated she understood the need for a plan when it comes to funding, but if the Commission has critical needs—even if just to get someone to look into baseline costs for necessary and required outcomes—is it worth it to have a formal debate and motion set forward by the Commission discussing ideas and plans? She pinpoints that she agrees with Commissioner Lopez: Is what the Commission charged with doing even in the realm of possibility? What does this group want to say to the City about baseline funding to get the Commission off the ground?

OPEN DISCUSSION



- l. Genesis Pimentel discussed that the Timelines, Archives, and Curricula subcommittee would like to put products out. She also discussed that the bicentennial commemorations created genuine products like the City Hall daycare.
- m. Commissioner Lopez stated that the Council, Commissioner Kenzie Bok, City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune are committed.
- n. Commissioner O'Donnell asked if we could use this sense of urgency to our benefit since Bunker Hill is June of 2025, so we need a brand 6 months before that, and you need to start 3 months before then for research, which essentially puts our timeline to right now.
- o. Commissioner Suzanne Taylor stated that around the 30th of April, there is a draft for a letter to the Mayor's Office to give them a plan and state that branding is necessary to see what happens and if creative agencies can do branding in this timeline.
- p. Commissioner Trent shed light on the fact that we are actually delayed since Paul Revere's ride will be commemorated in April 2025, and the urgency is that you don't want national cameras here with no branding.
- q. Chair Jeffries asked if the City ever commissioned a different organization to lead commemoration since there are inherent challenges to the bureaucratic nature of a commission. He noted that if this were an independent entity, the branding would be done and volunteer commissioners would not have to think about staffing things on top of their jobs. He asked if that could be a potential recommendation.
 - i. Genesis Pimentel replied that she thinks that having it set up as a Commission is extremely limiting. For the 200th, it was the Office of the Bicentennial and that had so much more ability and power to plan and collaborate in contrast to a Commission with just one staff person.
 - ii. Commissioner Elliott-Ortega stated she would not want the work of communicating all of this back to the entire City government. She stated there should be side conversations and outreach happening to signal urgency and confusion about how to move without support or clarity on resources. She stated she would be happy to advocate on behalf of Genesis Pimentel and the Commission with Commissioner Borders.
- r. Chair Jeffries followed up by stating that it's hard to do something on behalf of the City where we do not know the parameters of what they are allowed to do or that there is no money to do things. He stated that he's heard the words: "What is our charge?" so often in this meeting that it is apparent nothing is clear.
- s. Commissioner O'Donnell stated in other cities, there were funds allocated that were generated by a municipal entity and given to private and not-for-profit entities under the auspices of that arm that things got developed with the reasoning being that branding and other projects are broader than just



constituent relations because these are tourist commemorations that require economic engines.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. There were no public comments.

VI. ADJOURNMENT - 7:30 PM

- a. Commissioner Juan Lopez motioned to adjourn.

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