



**TIMELINES, ARCHIVES, AND CURRICULA SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Boston City Hall Boston, MA, 02201
Held virtually via Zoom

AUGUST 8, 2024

Commissioners Present: Joe Bagley, Bob Allison, Giordana Mecgani, Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai, Kristen Lafferty, Carolyn Goldstein, Dory Klein, David Leonard, Cedric Woods, Kimberly Barzola

Commissioners Absent: Angela Hedley-Mitchell, Liza Stearns, Tatiana Cruz, Collin Knight, Kimberly Barzola, Joan Ilacqua

Staff Present: Genesis Pimentel, Commemoration Commission Manager; Kayla Skillin, Archivist for Collections Management; Lauryn Sharp, Project Archaeologist

Public: Frank O'Brien, Hyde Park Historical Society

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

SESSION BEGINS - 2:00 PM

I. WELCOME

- a. Commemoration Commission Manager Genesis Pimentel welcomed attendees.

II. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Meeting minutes from both June and July were approved.

III. QUARTERLY MEETING DEBRIEF

- a. Genesis Pimentel asked Commissioners to debrief the larger Commission meeting that took place in July.
- b. Summary
 - i. Commissioner Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai discussed the larger Commission's reaction to the timeline component this subcommittee has been working on, stating that the subcommittees needs to find a way to present this project as an invitation to engage with the timeline as a product to have residents interact and build an archive of narratives but that he believes there should be appropriate branding and messaging around the project.



1. Action Item: Genesis Pimentel proposed that part of this meeting be dedicated to thinking through what message the Commissioners would like to convey with the timeline project.
 2. Next Steps: She stated that she can reach out and work with her cabinet's Communications team to craft a narrative based on what is said at this meeting.
 3. Timeframe: TBD
- c. Commissioner Dory Klein discussed the potential for a solution that works closely with the Events, Exhibits, and Trails subcommittee.
- i. Action Item: She proposed a solution in the shape of an event held at BPL branches to invite people to contribute to a living timeline.
 - ii. Next Steps: If this is an option that is salient to other commissioners, Genesis Pimentel can propose and plan a joint meeting with EET and TAC. Commissioner Klein can check in with BPL to see if there is interest in hosting this programming.
 - iii. Timeframe: TBD
- d. A discussion around Jim Vrabel's database *When and Where in Boston* took place. Commissioners continued to express concerns around platforming Vrabel's project that—while very impressive and could be a resource that we can direct people to—is a singular perspective and that they are unable to fully evaluate the extensiveness of the project because Vrabel has only shown a fraction of the work (DK, GM). Another offered perspective on the fact that the subcommittee engaged with Vrabel's project initially to have a building block for the timeline the subcommittee is being asked to work on (BA). One commissioner commented that the Commissioner not in this subcommittee might have seen Vrabel's project as a work in progress if there were dedicated staff doing outreach to continuously populate the website (CW).
- e. Chair Joe Bagley stated that the more it is discussed, the more it becomes clear that the City cannot host Vrabel's project, and he mentions how another Commissioner noted that the visibility of this project will matter, so it may not be perceived as a living document when put out into the world.
- i. Action Item: He stated that the subcommittee could come up with a more curated list of dates and have Vrabel's project be a place to point to when people want additional information.
 - ii. Next Steps: Commissioners should begin planning what dates go in and why.
 - iii. Timeframe: TBD



- iv. Action Item: Chair Bagley asked if Pimentel knew if living documents are okay to be displayed on the official City website through a best practices and communication lens and whether residents and press would be okay with that kind of product. He suggested that, if not, a survey can be the living document and then the final product gets posted.
- v. Next Steps: Pimentel should reach out to Communications.
- vi. Timeframe: TBD
- f. Commissioner Giordana Mecagni pitched that it could be multiple timelines instead of one large timeline. She reiterated the question: What is the Commission's role?
- g. Chair Bagley discussed thinking that the Commission can function as a group that vets projects and distributes funding or vetters of ideas and proposals to make sure equity is in every project and not necessarily putting together the timeline or curricula. Pimentel asked whose proposals are being vetted if organizations are not being supported or funded by the City. She inquired if that would mean City departments instead.
- h. Commissioner Lafferty asked if it was possible for the Commission to solicit corporate donations.
 - i. Action Item/Next Step: Pimentel reaches out to appropriate departments to find out if there is a way for the City to remove barriers by comping costs instead of funding.
- i. Discussions on the MOTT 250 grant took place and whether it was feasible to use it for hiring fundraising consultants or contractors to create a plan for timelines. Commissioner Mecagni asked if anyone in the City does external relation work that could write this grant on the subcommittee's behalf, and Chair Bagley stated that the Partnerships team might.

IV. WORKING SESSION

- a. Kayla Skillin put together a draft survey for archives to engage in, and the subcommittee reviewed it.
 - i. Chair Bagley asked if this survey should go to archives and history holders.
 - ii. Commissioner Dory Klein asked what engaging non-institutional history holders might look like, and if it would make sense to have two different surveys for each.
 - iii. Chair Bagley stated that the word Resources in the title should be changed to something such as Stories and for Institutions to be named Entity or something less restrictive.



- iv. Commissioner Klein stated that in addition to short descriptions of holdings, the question might invite people to list key terms related to their archives.
 - v. Skillin commented that she wanted more clarification on whether this would be user-driven or backend focused in terms of what is being paraphrased from the survey and who would be in charge of that management.
 - vi. Chair Bagley stated that he and Skillin were concerned that by providing checkboxes, people would include themselves as having materials about a subject when it's not enough to engage with fully, which is why he is leaning towards key words.
- b. Commissioner Mecagni suggested that the subcommittee think about which organizations they would like to engage with and what exactly the Commission or City would want to maintain. She suggested collecting an address, affiliation, website, description, contact information, and keywords and not anything that might need significant or constant updating. She suggested linking the current historical resources we have and asking for updates, which would reduce redundancies. She suggested having a checkbox for museums, historical societies, etc and who else should be contacted. Commissioner Klein suggested defining important words and giving examples for people who are not tied to institutions and adding an optional question about what else the subcommittee should be considering and.
- c. Action Item: Commissioners review the survey once more before it gets sent out.
- i. Next Step: Skillin implements edits given in this meeting.
 - ii. Timeframe: By September meeting
 - iii. Next Step: Pimentel and Chair Bagley review the survey with Communications and Engagement to get approval for sending it out. They will also plan on reaching out to Language and Communications Access for translations when necessary.
 - iv. Timeframe: After September meeting
 - v. Key Points: Skillin asked who is being sent this product. Chair Bagley stated that it should be sent first to the known Archives group and have them either send it out or give us contact information of others to send this out to. Commissioner Klein asked for paper versions, and Commissioner Mecagni asked for the archives to focus on interactions with or in Boston.
- d. Chair Bagley and Skillin presented the front and backend of the database.



- i. Action Item: Commissioner Klein offered to discuss this project with her colleagues at BPL to see if the database is something that the BPL could support by providing a landing page and infrastructure and asked if the subcommittee would be interested in that prospect and for guidance on that conversation.
- ii. Key Points: Pimentel stated that it would be a great idea for Boston Public Library to host it in perpetuity as long as it is presented and acknowledged to be an idea and product that was started and worked on by the Commemoration Commission. Commissioner Mecagni stated that Commissioner Klein is at a new department in BPL, Community History, so if that department is willing to take it on, it would make sense to start there.
- iii. Next Steps: Commissioner Klein has discussions with colleagues in her department and in Digital & Online Services once she gets some language around the project to get a sense on how they feel about the project and if they are interested in it. She stated that if it was okay, she would share links to drafts with her colleagues.
- iv. Next Steps: Genesis Pimentel, Commissioner Klein, and others can collaborate on writing up a pitch if need be. Chair Bagley stated that he would send this information to Commissioner Klein and wait to hear back from the BPL.
- v. Timeframe: By September/October meeting
- e. There was consensus that this product has multiple useful applications.
- f. Genesis Pimentel reviewed the City of Boston Archives tags/headings and discussed how she grouped the tags.
 - i. Action Item: Pimentel to finish the grouping.
 - ii. Next Steps: Pimentel would send it to Chair Bagley.
 - iii. Timeframe: Ahead of September meeting

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. There was no public comment.

VI. ADJOURNMENT - 3:30 PM

- a. Chair Bob Allison motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- b. Chair Joe Bagley seconded the motion.