



Commemoration Commission



City of Boston
Mayor Michelle Wu

May 31, 2026

Alex Geourntas
Office of the City Clerk
1 City Hall Plaza
Room 601
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mr. Geourntas,

Pursuant to the Boston, Massachusetts Municipal Code 7-15 Ordinance 2021 c. 19 § 1 that created the Commemoration Commission, which states that the Commission will file a bi-annual progress report with the City Clerk, the Commemoration Commission and City staff present the semi annual report of the Commission's work herein.

Sincerely,



Genesis Pimentel
Commemoration Commission Manager
Office of Historic Preservation



COMMEMORATION COMMISSION PROGRESS REPORT

May 2026



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MISSION STATEMENT

“The Commission exists to affirm that our diverse and intertwined community histories are of great value to the City of Boston, that historical tourism should be a driver of true shared prosperity, that inclusive and honest historical memory is a crucial public good worthy of attention and resources, and that communities all over the City should have the tools and resources to research, preserve, acknowledge, and celebrate their history.”¹

The Commemoration Commission was established to honor the historic moments in Boston’s history that developed the City’s identity and continue to shape its legacy. Central to this mission is recognizing that there are stories and moments that shaped Boston’s history that have not yet been promulgated and interpreted in our collective memory. The Commission is composed of thought leaders, community organizers, and historians that will help to highlight the stories we know and those that we may be unfamiliar with.

Commemorating the 250th of the American Revolution in Boston means honoring the ideals of innovation, of rebellious spirits, of diversity, and of changing your environment for the better. In addition, the Commission is commemorating the 400th anniversary of the founding of Boston. We are reflecting on the courage it took ordinary people to create and sustain communities that impact the world, the courage it took to build coalitions, and to go through both triumph and tragedy. We are committed to think towards the future to lay foundations that will benefit Bostonians to come.

¹ Boston, Massachusetts, Municipal Code 7-15, Ord. 2021 c. 19 § 1.

BOSTON 250 UPDATES

KNOX TRAIL 250

To start this year off, the City of Boston commemorated the 250th anniversary of the Siege of Boston, the journey taken by Henry Knox and the Noble Train of Artillery, and the evacuation of the British from Dorchester Heights.

Revolution 250 planned events across the state to highlight the places that Knox traveled as he and the artillery transported 59 cannons to Dorchester Heights. In addition to the Evacuation Day event in South Boston, to expand how we understand the Siege's impact on Boston and its residents, the City of Boston partnered with Revolution 250 to contextualize and honor Roxbury's role in the fortifications and the impact the Siege had on its members on March 7, 2026.

Two Commemoration Commission members were among those speaking at the event that took place at First Church Roxbury. Professor Bob Allison, Suffolk University, and Dr. Noelle Trent, Museum of African American History, both spoke of the importance of Roxbury to the Siege, explaining how Roxbury was the base of the Continental Army and suffered the loss of thousands of Roxbury Russet apples and trees as well as explaining how the African-American presence, influence, community, and ideologies of liberty shaped Boston and its fight against the British.

HISTORIC MARKERS PROGRAM

One of the primary ideas presented in the Commemoration Commission's first six-month report was a "Marker/Plaque Commemoration Program, including digital markers, maps, and guides for tourists." It is exciting to report that, after much work between departments, Commissioners, and stakeholders, the Office of Historic Preservation and the Commemoration Commission are launching a Historic Markers Program via the Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund.

1. HISTORIC MARKERS COMMUNITY GRANTS

One output from this program is a Historic Markers Community Grant coming out to the Browne Fund. Organizations are eligible to apply for a small grant of \$7,500 to support community engagement, research into 10 possible markers, with the final report including an application to the Historic Markers Program in the Office of Historic Preservation that will launch in the fall. The application is due May 11, 2026 and the grant period will run until November 30, 2026 with the final report due on December 31, 2026.

2. HISTORIC MARKERS TASK FORCE

To aid the development of this Historic Marker Program, a task force of Commemoration Commission members has been working on the pilot program. There are members from each advisory committee on this task force. Together, they have advised on the development of eligibility criteria, criteria for selection, frameworks for the program that will be taking place this summer, and more. Their work will be reflected in the summer landscape of Boston 250 this year.

3. ROLE OF THE COMMISSION AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

We are working on the role that the Commission and the stakeholder advisory will have in the development of the long-term Historic Markers Program launching in the fall.

A. LEGISLATION AND PRESERVATION TOOLS

The Legislation and Preservation Tools advisory committee may function as a body that will advise on policy around Historic Markers. This may include policies around the application process, the installation process, and removal and storage, and other areas of policy that may interact with the Markers program.

B. TIMELINES, ARCHIVES, AND CURRICULA

The Timelines, Archives, and Curricula advisory committee may function as a review body of written content and key dates to be highlighted of the digital component as well as a group that supports the review of sources for physical markers.

C. EVENTS, EXHIBITS, AND TRAILS

The Events, Exhibits, and Trails advisory committee may function as a review body for the digital components of the markers program, which may include advising on what sites, trails, and key dates may be highlighted digitally.

SUMMARY

COMMEMORATION COMMISSION UPDATES

In October 2025, the Commemoration Commission reduced the quarterly meeting times from two hours to an hour and a half. In addition, the legislation changed the election of Commemoration Commission co-chairs from every year to every two years. There will be an upcoming vote for the Commemoration Commission co-chairs in July 2026.

As of May 2026, there is one vacancy on the Commission. Two of those seats, Embrace Boston and Boston Preservation Alliance, were nominated by their organizations and sworn in. The seat for the archivist role that became available as stated in the last report has also now been filled. The seat for the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce remains vacant.

The Commemoration Commission will be crucial in the development of the Historic Markers Program. In addition, the Commission will begin gearing up for the development of Boston 400.

APPENDIX

MEMBERS OF THE COMMEMORATION COMMISSION

Events, Exhibits, and Trails

Jay Ash, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership
Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture*
Juan Eusebio, Local 26 Union Member
Faries Gray, Massachusetts Tribe
Erika Chen, Embrace Boston
Juan Lopez, Latinx History Expert
Dave O'Donnell, Meet Boston
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce*
Nat Sheidley, Revolutionary Spaces
Kyera Singleton, The Royall House
Suzanne Taylor, The Freedom Trail Foundation
Sam Chambers, The Boston Foundation
Noelle Trent, Museum of African-American Boston
Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion*
Eric Hanson-Plass, NPS

Legislation and Preservation Tools

Kenzie Bok, Boston Housing Authority
Kathy Kottaridis, Office of Historic Preservation
Senator Mike Rush, Boston Legislative Delegation
Council President Ruthzee Louijeune, Boston City Council
Jean-Luc Pierite, North American Indian Center of Boston
Lydia Lowe, Chinatown Community Land Trust
Katherine Davis-Wheeler, Boston Preservation Alliance
Amanda Zettel, Charlestown Preservation Society
Margaret Dyson, Treasury Department
Representative Dan Ryan, Boston Legislative Delegation

Timelines, Archives, and Curricula

Bob Allison, Suffolk University & Revolution 250
Joe Bagley, City Archaeologist
Kimberly Barzola, Society of American Archivists & Archivists and Archives of Color
Tatiana M.F. Cruz, Simmons University
Kay Schlozman, Boston University
Joan Ilacqua, Queer History Boston
David Leonard, Boston Public Library
Collin Knight, Live Like a Local Tours Boston
Kristen Lafferty, City Archivist
Giordana Mecagni, Boston University & East Boston Museum and Historical Society
Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai, Massachusetts Historical Society
Cedric Woods, Institute for New England Native American Studies - UMass Boston

*Seat currently empty due to transitions in their organizations.

