



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations

Lydia Edwards, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

December 13, 2021

Dear Councilors:

Docket #0638, ordinance to create the Boston Commemoration Commission, was sponsored by Councilor Kenzie Bok, and referred to the Committee on May 5, 2021.

Summary of Legislation:

Docket #0638 is an ordinance that would establish a Boston Commemoration Commission, with the purpose of developing a plan to celebrate upcoming historical anniversaries of significance to Boston and to ensure that the celebration of such historical events is inclusive, historically accurate, and celebrates the diverse history of Boston. The ordinance establishes the membership of the commission, authorizes the creation of subcommittees, and defines the responsibilities and authority of the commission.

Information Gathered at the Hearing and Working Session:

The Committee held a public hearing on this docket on October 19, 2021. At the hearing the Committee heard from Administration officials about archeology programs in the City, historic preservation, and the role of City Archives. Testimony was also heard from members of the public in support of the proposal, highlighting the importance of inclusivity and equity in historic preservation and tourism, as well as suggestions to include Boston National Historical Parks, engage the business side of heritage tourism, and include a member of the Massachusetts Tribe.

The Committee held a working session on December 2, 2021. The Chair presented a redline version of the ordinance based on feedback from the Administration and community advocates following the hearing.

Rosanne Foley, Executive Director of the Boston Landmarks Commission; David Leonard, President of Boston Public Library; Kate Davis, Director of the Office of Tourism, Sports, and Entertainment; Kara Elliot-Ortega, Chief of Arts and Culture; Mariama White-Hammond, Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space; Michael Cannizzo, Deputy Director for Urban Design at the Boston Planning & Development Agency; Lynn Smiledge, Chair of the Boston Landmarks Commission; and John McColgan, City Archivist were present at the hearing and working session on behalf of the Administration.

Summary of Changes:

Based on feedback received at the hearing and working session, and in conversations with the Administration and community groups, the following changes were made to the ordinance as filed:

- Edits to 7-15.1 to better clarify the ordinance's purpose.
- Edits to 7-15.2 for consistency with the City Charter, clarity, and to reflect community feedback:
 - Regarding the Commission's membership composition (first paragraph and subsequent bullet points):
 - Striking the words "with approval of the City Council" in the first line;
 - Addition of one member from the Boston Chamber of Commerce, one member from The Boston Foundation, and One member from the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership;
 - Addition of two members who are archivists;
 - Addition of one member who is a digital archivist or preservation specialist;
 - Striking the words "or another individual with expertise in Indigenous history" following "one member affiliated with the North American Indian Center of Boston;"
 - Addition of a separate member with an expertise in local Indigenous history;
 - Striking the words "or another individual with an expertise in local Black history" following "one member from the museum of African American History;"
 - Addition of a separate member with an expertise in local Black history;
 - Simplification to one member who is a hospitality worker;
 - Addition of three members from National Parks of Boston;
 - Striking the words "Chief Academic Officer" before "of the Boston Public Schools," and replacing it with "The Superintendent;"
 - Addition of the City Archaeologist; and
 - Striking the words "designated by the Council President" after "A Boston City Councilor."
 - Regarding subcommittees (second paragraph):
 - Striking the words "(members #1 through #21)";
 - Striking the second sentence, and replacing it with "All members of the Boston Commemoration Commission shall be assigned to at least one subcommittee"; and
 - Striking the last sentence of the paragraph, and the following three bullet points directing appointment of ex officio members to subcommittees.
 - Regarding election of Chairs (fifth paragraph):
 - Striking the sentence, "If there is a tie, the alternate hospitality worker member shall cast a vote;" and
 - Adding to the end of the paragraph the sentence, "Members of each subcommittee will elect a subcommittee Chair every year with a simple majority vote."
 - Note- these edits are meant to imply that a Chair cannot be elected without a majority vote; a tie would require the members to vote again until a majority is reached.

- Edits to 7-15.3 to reflect community and Administration feedback, as well as some technical fixes:
 - In the first paragraph, first sentence, striking the words “ensure that” and replacing them with the words “advise the Mayor and relevant departments on making”;
 - In the first paragraph, second sentence, adding the words “will advise the Mayor and relevant departments on the following” following the first four words (“The Boston Commemoration Commission”);
 - In the first paragraph, second sentence, inserting a new (d), “recommending how to collaborate with state-level and regional commemoration efforts”;
 - In the first paragraph, second sentence, originally (e), now (f), striking the words “carry out any other tasks” and replacing with the words “determining whether any other subcommittees should be added”;
 - In the second paragraph, the Subcommittee is now called, “Events, Exhibits, and Trails”;
 - In the second paragraph, first sentence, striking the word “planning”, and replace it with the words “producing recommendations for”;
 - In the third paragraph, the Subcommittee is now called, “Timelines, Archives, and Curricula”;
 - In the third paragraph, first sentence, striking the word “identifying” and replacing it with “recommending”;
 - In the third paragraph, first sentence, adding the phrase, “including through digital archives,” following “highlight Boston’s rich archival resources”;
 - In the third paragraph, adding a new second sentence, following the first sentence: “The Subcommittee will also recommend how collections can be made accessible and inclusive, as well as recommend how the archival capacity of all communities could be supported and expanded.”;
 - In the third paragraph, last sentence, adding the word “recommended” between “initial” and “timeline”;
 - In the sixth paragraph, first sentence, striking the words “and may invite such guests as the membership deems appropriate”; and
 - Various technical edits for grammatical clarity and consistency.

Rationale and Recommended Action:

In anticipation of two major upcoming historical anniversaries that will be marked locally and nationally, the 250th anniversary of the country’s founding in 2026, and Boston’s 400th anniversary in 2030, the City has an opportunity to revitalize the way it presents, supports, prioritizes, and preserves its history. The Boston Commemoration Commission will work to ensure that presentations of Boston’s history include the history of every neighborhood, the history of indigenous people and Black Bostonians, and more recent history. The Commission’s work will highlight historical tourism across the City, update historic preservation tools and bring more intention to equity, expand historical curricula so that young Bostonians can see themselves mirrored in the City’s history, and bring together City departments that touch Boston’s history in different ways. Docket #0638 is an effort to ensure that when Boston is thought of as a historical City, that history is an inclusive one.

The Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, to which the following was referred:

Docket #0638, ordinance to create the Boston Commemoration Commission,

submits a report recommending that this docket **ought to pass in a new draft.**

For the Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lydia Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lydia Edwards, Chair
Committee on Government Operations