



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

March 19, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #0548, An Ordinance Amending City of Boston Code, Ordinances Chapter VII Section 7-15.

This matter was sponsored by Councilors Gabriela Coletta Zapata and Ruthzee Louijeune and referred to the Committee on February 26, 2025.

Summary of Legislation

Docket #0548 is a proposed amendment to the City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter VII, Section 7-15, to replace the existing section with the language therein. The proposed ordinance revises the existing ordinance, establishing the Boston Commemoration Commission by restructuring and reducing its membership, modifying its leadership and meeting structure, and shifting its role from implementation to advisory.

The proposed ordinance formally establishes the Boston Commemoration Commission as amended and defines its revised structure and membership. Under the proposed ordinance, the Commission will consist of 39 members, as opposed to 44. This reduction is due to the removal of specific ex-officio positions, including the Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, the Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space, the Executive Director and Chair of the Landmarks Commission, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Tourism, Sports, and Entertainment, and the Director of the Boston Planning and Development Agency. The proposed ordinance also reduces the number of National Parks of Boston representatives from three to one, adds a seat for Embrace Boston, replaces the Chief of Economic Development with the Chief of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, and introduces the Director of the Office of Historic Preservation as an ex-officio member. Under the new ordinance, the Commission will consist of members representing tourism-related businesses in and outside downtown, the Boston Chamber of Commerce, The Boston Foundation, the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership, and Embrace Boston. It shall also include a hospitality worker, a member of the Boston Legislative Delegation, and a member of the Boston City Council, as well as members with expertise in archival preservation, digital preservation, and Boston's diverse history, including local Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) history, Indigenous history, Black history, European immigrant history, Latinx history, women's history, LGBTQ+ history, and intellectual history. Further, there shall be representation from institutions such as the Museum of African American History, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Boston Preservation Alliance, Revolutionary Spaces, and the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau. The ex-officio members shall include representatives from the National Parks of Boston, the Chief of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, the Chief of Arts and Culture, the City Archivist, the City Archaeologist, the President of the Boston Public Library, the Director of the Office of Historic Preservation, and the Collector-Treasurer as steward of the Community Preservation Trust Fund.



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The proposed ordinance also modifies leadership and meeting requirements, allowing the Commission to elect a Chair or Co-Chairs every two years, as opposed to electing a single Chair annually. Additionally, stakeholder groups replace formal subcommittees. These stakeholder groups shall not take official votes but may share ideas and recommendations in a nonbinding fashion. The stakeholder groups shall be structured by theme, including but not limited to Events, Exhibits, and Trails; Timelines, Archives, and Curricula; and Legislation and Preservation Tools. The ordinance states that the City shall assign the equivalent of two full-time staff to support the Commission. The Commission's full meetings shall be open to any organizational member of Revolution 250 and/or of state-level Commissions focused on commemorating Massachusetts history. Under the proposed ordinance, members shall continue to serve without compensation shall serve for the duration of the Commission's existence unless removed by a majority vote. If a vacancy arises, the Mayor shall appoint a new representative from another equally relevant office or organization within ninety (90) days.

Finally, under the proposed ordinance, the Commission's role is also adjusted to focus its efforts on providing guidance and recommendations on historical anniversaries, collaboration with state commissions, and funding opportunities. While the existing ordinance assigns the Commission responsibility for developing and executing commemorative plans, proposing legislative and preservation tools, and conducting a citywide historic building survey, the proposed ordinance positions the Commission as an advisory body that supports and informs these efforts rather than overseeing their implementation. Shifting the Commission's role in this way will allow the Commission to concentrate on offering expertise, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that preservation initiatives align with the City's broader goals. However, despite this shift, the requirement to submit bi-annual progress reports remains in place to ensure continued accountability and transparency. By transitioning to a more advisory role, the Commission is better positioned to guide historical preservation efforts while allowing City departments and partners to carry out implementation effectively.

The Commission may continue beyond June 30, 2031, provided it continues submitting reports, whereas the existing language in the Code does not specify this condition. The ordinance does not mandate an automatic extension but allows the Commission to continue operations as needed.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO PASS**.

Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair
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