

## Seal, Flag, and Motto Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 23, 2025; 10:00AM

### Commission Members in Attendance via Zoom:

- Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary, Executive Office of Education, Co-Chair
- Kate Fox, Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, Co-Chair
- Jim Peters, Executive Director, Commission on Indian Affairs
- Lilia Melikechi, Communications and Training Manager, Massachusetts Office on Disability
- Summer Confuorto, Traditional Arts Programs Officer, Massachusetts Cultural Council
- Elizabeth Solomon, Member chosen by the Executive Director of the Commission on Indian Affairs
- Rhonda Anderson, Member chosen by the Governor
- Dr. John D. Warner, Jr., State Archivist, Secretary of State or Designee
- Ben Haley, National Register Director at the Massachusetts Historical Commission

### Commission Members Not in Attendance

- Brian Boyles, Executive Director, Mass Humanities

### Opening Remarks:

- Co-Chair **Kate Fox** opened the third meeting of the Seal, Flag, and Motto Advisory Commission at 10:03AM
- **Ms. Fox** introduced Dr. Robert Powers as Secretary Patrick Tutwiler's designee
- **Ms. Fox** reviewed the meeting agenda
- **Ms. Fox** took a roll call
- **Ms. Fox** called for a review of the meeting minutes and entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting which occurred on May 28, 2025
- Motion passed, roll call taken, and meeting minutes approved at 10:06 A.M.
- **Ms. Fox** moved to an update from the Co-Chairs

### Update from Co-Chairs:

- **Ms. Fox**- shared a presentation with the Commission
- Public Submission period 6/18/25 total of 1,165 submissions
- Currently, there are 997 flag, 377 seal, and 407 motto submissions
- **Ms. Fox**- stated that sentiments surrounding intellectual property have come up through public comment, and a disclaimer was included on the Formstack submission form. The Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) Counsel have directed us to reshare the disclaimer which includes: *By submitting a Massachusetts seal, flag or motto entry, you hereby acknowledge, represent and agree that your submission is original and does not infringe on any third-party rights. All submissions become the property of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and may be used, reproduced, published, displayed, modified or distributed, in whole or in part, for any governmental, promotional, archival*

*or educational purpose, in any format and in perpetuity, without compensation. By making this submission, you release any rights or property interest in the submitted materials and waive any claims to copyright, attribution or other rights in the submitted materials, and consent to the use of your name with connection to the submitted materials without additional permission or compensation.*

- **Ms. Solomon-** noted that given the concerns around intellectual property, that there be some way to acknowledge them
- **Ms. Fox-** stated that it was always the intention that people who submitted the winning ideas would be published along with their work, and thanked the criteria development subcommittee, who worked through two meetings in the last two weeks, and helped develop the process to ultimately adopt the recommended list which she reiterated as following:
  - Round one is the exclusionary list, where anything that is offensive or vulgar would be eliminated, round two is the stoplight method using the red, yellow and green to sort through, and then round three scoring rubrics to do some numeric scoring of three submissions to move forward to the public hearings
  - Round one review exclusionary list includes no religions, no violence, no one culture, nothing vulgar, offensive or irrelevant to Massachusetts
- **Ms. Solomon-** suggested that within the exclusionary list, that there be a rationale as to why it was excluded and for the process of being sure that the Commission is as transparent as possible
- **Ms. Melikechi-** noted that she believes it's included under irrelevant exclusionary criteria, but reiterated that she would like to exclude any submission that includes a private company
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that the proposed round two method is to utilize the red, yellow, and green stoplight method that was proposed by Ted Kaye at the last Commission meeting. Ms. Fox went on to say that the idea is for the Commission to collect their 10-20 top favorites, to then be moved into a round three smaller pool, which would then be further divided into red- a submission is not worth considering, yellow-a potential- submission has elements that could be refined, and green- a submission has high potential and is perceived positively
- **Ms. Solomon-** noted that she had two points- first she would like to clarify that there are submissions that get different rankings from different members and wanted to ensure that the Commission is talking about everyone scoring each one as opposed to it being split up. She reiterated that it's important to discuss how to deal with something that two Commissioners put as yellow, or one Commissioner puts as green, or one Commissioner puts as red, and how that gets adjudicated
- **Ms. Fox-** acknowledged Ms. Solomon's points and continued to note that there's another point system based on Ted Kaye's recommendations that is calculated with green submissions being 1 point, and yellow submissions being ½ point, and that the first round of exclusionary submissions be done internally to then allow the Commissioners to get to the red, yellow, and green methods
- **Ms. Solomon-** stated that each Commissioner will have different ideas about what is green, yellow or red, and noted that Commissioners haven't had the chance to get to know each other and realize what's important to one another
- **Ms. Fox-** stated that the Criteria Development Subcommittee reviewed the proposed flag rubric, and asked that the full Commission adopt the recommendations of the subcommittee, which include the following:
  - Simplicity, color use, reproducibility, originality, representation with point systems for each including excellent for 5 points, good for 4 points, satisfactory for 3 points, and needs improvement for 1-2 points

- **Ms. Anderson-** asked the group if it would be better to have “effectively represents intended message” instead of cultures and values
- **Ms. Confuorto-** asked if this rubric is also coming from Ted Kaye’s recommendations or if it is coming from another source
- **Ms. Fox-** stated that it is a combination of sources from the research done into what other states have done in a similar process. In addition, Ms. Fox noted that the flag rubric may have more influence from the vexillology association, but that the seal and motto rubrics will not
- **Ms. Solomon-** reiterated that she would like to ensure that the Commission is discussing the intended message
- **Ms. Fox-** suggested that the Commission consider the work of the former commission
- **Mr. Tutwiler-** noted that messaging could be emergent through the scoring of the rubrics
- **Ms. Solomon-** echoed that she doesn’t believe that the intended messages of flag, seal and motto can be determined based solely on the submissions that have come in and reiterated that one of the things that the group should be doing as a Commission is talking about what we as Commissioners feel that accurately represents the Commonwealth. She continued to add to the Zoom chat for all panelists the following recommendations of the previous Commission on images at 10:49 AM:
  - Massachusetts should incorporate symbols and terms in a new seal and motto that are aspirational and inclusive of the diverse perspectives, histories and experiences of Massachusetts residents. Commission members compiled a list of appropriate terms that could be included in a new motto: • Commonwealth • For the common good • Equality • Hope 8 • Liberty • Names of Massachusetts tribal nations • Peace • Reciprocity
- **Ms. Fox-** thanked Ms. Solomon for her feedback and stated that she is grateful for Ms. Solomon’s work on this Commission and the prior one as well. Ms. Fox continued to note that hiring a professional graphic designer, with the priorities of the Commission at the forefront, will then convert the public submissions into the final three that will go in front of the public at hearings around the state
- **Ms. Solomon-** stated that she believes that representation should be removed from the rubric because there is no intended message
- **Ms. Anderson-** suggested that if the group can be proud and united, moving forward she feels like that there could be the intended message
- **Ms. Fox-** stated that she would hate to remove ‘representation’
- **Ms. Melikechi-** stated that she agrees and noted that everyone has an idea of what important values are to Massachusetts, and that’s there is a diverse group of Commissioners, and understands the point of how you can score something if you don’t know what it is, but reiterated that there is strength to leaving some room
- **Ms. Anderson-** stated that she is not asking to remove the criteria of representation but is looking at what effectively represents culture and instead to say intended message and that she would feel like that representation rubric would be fulfilled
- **Ms. Confuorto-** asked the group if there was something in the previous Commission’s report that might speak a little bit more to representation
- **Ms. Fox-** pointed out that it is a good suggestion, and that it can be investigated after the meeting
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that she would like to be mindful of everyone’s time and look at other rubrics and then circle back on intended message
- **Ms. Fox-** went over the proposed seal rubric, and stated that the criteria include aesthetic quality, distinctive symbolism, legibility and reproducibility, size and format usability, and cultural sensitivity and inclusivity with point system including excellent for 5 points, good for 4 points, satisfactory for 3 points, and needs improvement for 1-2 points. She

then asked the Commissioners if there were any comments or concerns going over the seal criteria

- With no comments, Ms. Fox moved to the proposed motto criteria- each criterion would be scored for each motto idea from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) in each category based on relevance to state identity, originality/uniqueness, emotional impact, clarity and brevity, timelessness, inclusiveness, memorability, and versatility of use
- **Ms. Anderson-** noted that she would like to ensure that state values are represented
- **Ms. Fox-** asked the group if the Commission is comfortable with adopting these rubrics, and acknowledged that there is more discussion to be had regarding the intended message
- A group discussion occurred regarding intended message, including if the components of the rubric would get the group to the intended message, if the process of reviewing the submissions would get the group to the intended message, and all agreed that a lengthy conversation needs to occur regarding intended message and shared values
- **Mr. Peters-** stated that he is looking forward to reviewing the submissions and thinks it's interesting to look at what the public has to offer. Mr. Peters continued that he thinks the group can talk about what visions are, but that would be a longer process
- **Ms. Melikechi-** asked the group if it would be possible to review the submissions, and then have a conversation about intended message and then score the submissions
- **Ms. Fox-** stated that she would like to see how the process unfolds, and wonders if that process is going to get the group to the intended message
- **Mr. Tutwiler-** reiterated what he was trying to articulate earlier in the meeting which is that he loves the recommendation and language that Ms. Solomon included in the Zoom chat from the previous Commission, and feels like that is captured in the three rubrics, going back to idea that is emergent of what we are looking for or engage in this rich process that sets some very real guardrails, and suggested having a conversation after having reviewed and scored the submissions, and getting to a place of sameness and perspective at the end
- **Ms. Anderson-** echoed Mr. Tutwiler's comments and suggested that the group provisionally accept these rubrics and then have a conversation moving forward that as submissions get eliminated, to have a clearer understanding as to what the intended message is
- **Ms. Fox-** inquired if the Commission was able to adopt the rubrics as they are, with the only change be made to representation, and in addition asked if the Commission was able to adopt the red, yellow, and green, with the 'excellent' criteria adjusted for both seal and flag
- **Mr. Tutwiler-** made a motion to adopt three rubrics with changes noted
- A roll call was taken, and the three rubrics were approved with a change to the excellent criteria on both seal and flag rubrics
- **Ms. Fox-** stated that a July meeting should be scheduled and suggested the 24<sup>th</sup> at 10 or 11 am. She noted that she would follow up with an email to confirm July 24<sup>th</sup> for the next Commission meeting via Zoom
- **Ms. Fox-** opened the meeting up to any additional concerns, questions or comments from the Commissioners
- **Ms. Solomon-** asked if the timeline for making the selection of the three finalists can be sent via email
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that the timeline and next meeting date confirmation would be sent to the group via email as well
- **Ms. Solomon-** suggested that the July meeting be longer than one hour to narrow down the submissions
- **Ms. Fox-** confirmed that the next meeting can be scheduled for 90 minutes

**Adjournment:**

- A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and a roll call was taken; the motion was seconded and passed unanimously
- The meeting was adjourned at 11:05A.M.

**Action Items and Next Steps:**

- **Ms. Fox** will follow up with an email including the items discussed during today's Commission meeting:
  1. Follow up email confirming a July meeting date
  2. Follow up email confirming the Commission's timeline