

Flag, Seal, and Motto Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 20th 2:15p.m.

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
- Brian Boyles, Executive Director, Mass Humanities
- 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

Opening Remarks:

- Co-Chair Kate Fox opened the meeting, stating the charge of the commission. The focus is on re-envisioning the symbols that represent the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, reflecting its history, values, and aspirations. The task is critical and requires a thoughtful and thorough review to ensure that the state's emblems inspire pride and are in line with contemporary identity.
- Kate emphasized the importance of public engagement and that the commission will actively listen to the voices of people across Massachusetts to help shape recommendations.
- Kate acknowledged legislative leadership and Governor Healey for their support of the commission's work.
- Kate called on commission members to introduce themselves.

Remarks from Commission Members:

- Senator Comerford expressed gratitude for the work of the commission and thanked members of the previous commission, noting that their work serves as the foundation for the current efforts. She highlighted the significance of state symbols and the importance of rejecting discrimination as the state moves forward on a transformative path.
- Representative Sabadosa echoed the thanks to the co-chairs and mentioned other states that have recently established new flags.

Legal Overview:

- Rob McGovern, Deputy General Counsel for the Executive Office of Economic Development gave a presentation on important legal requirements for serving on a state body, including a review of applicable laws: Conflict of Interest law, Public Records law, Open Meeting Law, and the special state employees' rules.

Commission Charge Review:

- **Kate** presented an overview of the commission's charge, a summary of recommendations from the previous commission, and examples of flag and seal redesign processes from other states.
- The current flag, seal, and motto were reviewed, and legislative language requirements and budget considerations were discussed.

Next Steps:

1. **Meeting Cadence:**
 - Discussion about determining the regular meeting schedule and hearing locations to ensure regional diversity.
2. **Subcommittees:**
 - Plans for subcommittees to handle specific areas of the commission's charge.
3. **RFP (Request for Proposals):**
 - The commission will issue an RFP to seek potential designs for the new flag, seal, and motto.

Discussion Points:

- **Elizabeth S.** emphasized the need for design and motto to complement one another.
- **Brian** noted that public meetings would be the most time-consuming task and raised concerns about staffing for these efforts and ensuring accessibility at public engagement events.
- **Kate** stated that the commission has the necessary staff for the project and invited members to share thoughts on the process.
- **Rhonda Anderson** suggested providing ideas to the public in advance so they can offer feedback on proposed designs. She also inquired about the project's timeframe.
- **Kate** clarified that public hearings would be held to react to finalist designs and that the RFP process would precede these hearings to gather initial responses.
- **Elizabeth** asked what guidance will be provided to RFP responders and how the commission would narrow the scope of responses, particularly regarding their role in guiding and developing the design process.
- **Jim Peters** highlighted the sword on the flag and seal as a major issue, recommending its removal and a change to the motto.
- **Kate** mentioned the deadline for the project completion by the end of the fiscal year.
- **Lilia** stressed the importance of public input and outreach to different indigenous groups to make the process as inclusive as possible.

Action Items and Next Steps:

1. **Draft RFP:**
 - A draft RFP will be prepared by the next commission meeting (04/29/2025) for discussion and feedback.
2. **Hearing Schedule:**
 - Develop a hearing schedule and determine next steps for public engagement.
3. **RFP Framework:**
 - The Executive Office of Education (EOE) and the Executive Office of Economic Development (EED) will draft the RFP, based on recommendations from the prior commission report.
4. **Materials for Review:**
 - Commission materials, including the prior commission's report, will be sent out ahead of the next meeting for review.
5. **Doodle Poll:**
 - A Doodle poll will be sent to find the best time for the next meeting.
6. **Cadence:**
 - The commission will adopt a monthly meeting cadence to prioritize and keep the project on track for completion by the fiscal year-end.

Adjournment:

- A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 3:02 PM. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- The meeting was adjourned.