

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

**Tuesday, July 29, 2025; 1:30PM**

### **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
- 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
- Brian Boyles, Executive Director, Mass Humanities

### **Commission Members Not in Attendance:**

- Summer Confuorto, Traditional Arts Programs Officer, Massachusetts Cultural Council

### **Opening Remarks:**

- Co-Chair **Ms. Fox** opened the meeting of the Seal, Flag, and Motto Advisory Commission at 1:33PM
- **Ms. Fox**- took a roll call
- **Ms. Fox**- began with an update from the co-chairs
- **Mr. Tutwiler**- thanked the Commissioners who are engaging in this work and on their review of more than 1,000 submissions of flags, seals, and mottos. He noted that the group is working to re-envision symbols that represent Massachusetts for generations to come, and it's about identity and continuing to inspire pride and unity amongst people in the Commonwealth
- **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 June 23, 2025
- Motion passed, roll call taken, and meeting minutes approved at 1:37PM

### **Review of Submissions and Commissioner Feedback on Seal, Flag, and Motto Submissions:**

- **Ms. Fox**- stated that the Commission reviewed 307 seal, 997 flag, and 408 motto submissions, and narrowed down the selections to 23 seals, 48 flags, and 32 mottos. These selections were given a green vote or multiple yellow votes which would have advanced them into a green category. She noted that the three rubrics, which were adopted in the June commission meeting, will be shared with the group for seal, flag, and motto to score the second-round submissions. Ms. Fox continued to note that these selections include seals, flags, and mottos that were given a “green” vote by

Commissioners, as well as selections that received multiple “yellow” votes by Commissioners.

- **Ms. Fox-** opened the meeting to the Commissioners for feedback
- **Ms. Anderson-** expressed how beautiful she thought that the submissions were as well as noted that there were submissions that provided a little humor as well
- **Ms. Solomon-** suggested that the Commissioners should consider the themes of the motto when determining the flag and seal, and think about how everything should have consistent messaging
- **Ms. Fox-** asked if there was any additional feedback on the submissions received and noted that the scoring rubrics give the space to score accordingly. She suggested to Commissioners that if they don't see the intention or design component as strong, to score the submission accordingly
- **Ms. Anderson-** stated that there is one submission she believed to be gorgeous for the seal, and asked if the group can contact that individual and ask them what their idea for a flag is
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that the Commission could look to see if that individual submitted both already
- **Mr. Haley-** stated that he remembers seeing flag designs and thinking that a simplified version of the flag design would be a good seal design, and agreed that there's a relationship between the flag and the seal
- **Ms. Solomon-** stated that she believes that the Commission has a very important job to do and cautioned against using math. She continued to note that she believes that there are some things that people may see that people think are great, but others think they are problematic, and if tallying is done in terms of how people scored, that there should be individual input
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that it is the intention of the August meeting, and that the rubrics that were adopted at the June meeting are tools to narrow down the submissions to get the Commission to a point where it is discussing nine submissions instead of 1,000. She noted that she believes that it's math, plus, how the Commission is looking at this
- **Ms. Fox-** provided the group with a recap of steps taken thus far, which have included the following: a timeline of the public hearings, a complete review of the first round of submissions, and a creative services procurement. She continued to note that the group will receive the second round of submissions to score against the rubrics, and after the discussion in August, the submissions will be refined to bring to the public hearings, which are to be scheduled in September and October
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that the Commission has received an extension from the Legislature, with its report due December 15, and reiterated that the Commission is working backwards from that date
- **Ms. Solomon-** reiterated that the group needs to get started on the Education Subcommittee work and believes that the Commission did a disservice by not providing education to the community before receiving submissions. She added that she believes that Commission members should discuss priorities and messaging prior to the next rubric round, to account for the various perspectives that are involved
- **Mr. Tutwiler-** Agreed with Ms. Solomon about having the conversation on Commissioner perspectives and reiterated that everyone brings their own experiences. He went on to note that the Education Subcommittee email regarding work is forthcoming
- **Ms. Melikechi-** pointed out that many of the mottos were in Latin, and that she liked many of the mottos. She noted that while scoring, she was thinking about what the English or Indigenous language translations would look like
- **Ms. Anderson-** noted that she really liked the flora as well as feather elements of submissions but is on the fence about those because of their implied meanings. She went

on to note that she thinks it would be great if flag and seal submissions could include elements of Indigenous communities

- **Ms. Solomon-** thanked Ms. Melikechi and Ms. Anderson for their comments, and noted that the flag submissions with flowers were beautiful but reiterated that she believes the mayflower is fraught with the Indigenous community
- **Ms. Fox-** inquired if there is another flower that is recommended
- **Ms. Anderson-** recommended the strawberry as a very storied flower
- **Ms. Solomon-** asked the group to keep in mind why this change has come forward, and that the Indigenous community has been identifying this change for decades. She stated that she believes it's important that with the seal, flag, and motto, that Indigenous iconography is not lost all together
- **Mr. Peters-** noted that the initiator of change on the state seal, alternative was a pine tree and noted that Maine was part of Massachusetts in the beginning. He went on to thank everyone for their work of going through all the submissions

#### Next steps:

- **Ms. Fox-** reminded Commissioners that a doodle poll was shared asking them to weigh in about availability for an August meeting, and that hearing locations and dates are being discussed. She continued to note that the team has gone through the vendor selection process and is close to finalizing that selection soon. She also reiterated that running rubrics will be provided to all Commissioners in order score seal, flag, and motto ideas
- **Ms. Solomon-** inquired about the selection of graphic designers and a conversation regarding the state procurement process occurred with **Ms. Fox**
- **Ms. Solomon-** reiterated her concern with cultural sensitivities if the chosen vendor is not used to working with communities outside of the dominant cultures
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that this component was incorporated into the guidelines of the procurement, and that both finalists included this in their responses
- **Ms. Fox-** went on to review the components of the flag and motto rubrics and stated that the Research Director at the Office of Travel and Tourism would be doing the tabulation of scores
- **Ms. Fox-** noted the proposed public hearing dates as tentatively September 8, 2025, September 11, 2025, October 2, 2025, October 21, 2025, October 30, 2025, and noted that the proposed dates would be emailed to the Commissioners after the meeting
- Comments were noted about the public hearing locations including **Ms. Solomon-** noting that a location in greater Boston should be chosen, **Ms. Melikechi-** inquired about hybrid features for each hearing, and **Ms. Anderson-** requested that the greater Boston locations be accessible by public transportation
- **Ms. Solomon-** stated that she is concerned about the timing of the public hearings and believes that it limits who can attend a public hearing from 3-5PM. She went on to note that it's important to have the public hearings outside of the normal 9-5 business hours
- A group discussion ensued regarding virtual meetings, and **Ms. Solomon** noted that she's uncomfortable with the proposed dates and accommodating everyone that has comments
- **Ms. Fox-** reiterated that the feedback email address is available to all who have comments as well
- **Ms. Melikechi-** asked the group about their thoughts on notifying individuals whose ideas have been advanced to the next scoring round, and a discussion ensued with **Ms. Solomon** regarding this
- **Ms. Fox-** noted that in submitting ideas the person has agreed that their ideas may be modified by a graphic designer

**Adjournment:**

- **Ms. Fox-** made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and a roll call was taken; the motion was seconded and passed unanimously
- The meeting was adjourned at 2:32PM

**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 an August meeting date
  2. Follow up email with three scoring rubric documents which will include seals, flags, and mottos that were advanced to round two: to be returned by August 18<sup>th</sup>