



Maine Semiquincentennial Commission

Meeting Minutes

December 1, 2023

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Zoom

Commission Members Present: Secretary Shenna Bellows, Kate McBrien, Earle Shettleworth, Peter Merrill, Bernard Fishman, Julia Gray, Robin Talbot, Ekhlas Ahmed, Marcia Minter, Kirk Mohny, Kelli Deveaux, Richard LaBelle, Chief Clarissa Sabattis, Joann Bautista, Greg Pierce (for Governor Mills), Sylvia de Boer (for Speaker Talbot Ross)

Commission Members Absent: Lori Fisher, Abbe Levin, President Troy Jackson, Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross

Members of the Public in Attendance: Maria Yarborough, Rob Stevens, Capt. Jonathan Bratton, Mike Holt

Introductions

After swearing in those Commission members who were able to attend in person, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows confirmed a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:17 pm. Secretary Bellows offered introductory remarks to America 250 Commission Members' first meeting. The Secretary outlined her priorities for the America250 Commission and the Department of State. Secretary Bellows noted she is excited about the American250 project, recognizing its historical significance and the challenge and pleasure it presents in exploring every aspect of the nation's past.

Review and Discussion of Chapter 126

Deputy Secretary of State Joann Bautista reviewed the *Resolve to Establish a Commission to Commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Founding of the United States (H.P. 665 - L.D. 1029)*. She explained Section 5 – Duties as ‘the meat and

potatoes' of what the Commission will be doing. Section 7 - Staff Assistance. A staff position is funded and pending Bureau of Human Resources position. The full-time, limited term position will be report to the Maine State Archivist and serve the Commission. Section 9 – Compensation, speaks to reimbursements for Commission members. Section 10 - Meetings. The Commission plans to hold up to five meetings. Additional meetings may be convened, if necessary, with a maximum of five scheduled. Section 11 - Report. The Commission will submit an annual report to the Legislature and the Governor discussing the work of the Commission. Section 12 - Maine Semiquincentennial Fund. This establishes a fund administered by the Secretary of State for funds that are received by the Commission. The funds do not lapse and must be carried forward and used for the purposes of the resolve. The Commission may accept and deposit money in the fund from private and public sources.

Personal Reflections on Hopes for the Commission

The Commission went around the room and commented on their personal reflections and hopes for the Commission.

Review and Discussion of LR 2669 to Expand Commission Membership

Kate McBrien updated the Commission on LR 2669, a bill sponsored by Representative Sachs to expand the membership of the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission. Representative Sachs seeks to ensure that each of the five tribes is represented on the Commission as well as members of the legislature. The proposed language includes legislative representation, representatives from each tribe, and two public members: one from a statewide organization advocating for Franco-American culture and one from a state-based organization promoting multi-generational African American culture. The Commission's membership will increase from 15 to 25, providing a more comprehensive range of perspective. The State and Local Government joint-legislative committee will consider the bill, leading to public hearings and work sessions. The proposed bill is expected to have a higher fiscal note than the previous one. The bill aims to provide possible reimbursements to ensure an equitable approach to the Commission's work.

Discussion of Staff Support for the Commission

There is one staff position funded, called the America250 Coordinator. It was not tied into this bill; it was added to the Archives budget request. This position is a limited term state employment position.

National America250 Commission

The National America250 Commission has reached out and would like Maine to sign on with them as an official partner. In doing so the Commission would get a website domain and \$10,000 to support the Commission's work. The proposal involves a

contract/agreement to use the national logo. Kate asked if anyone knew of the National America230 Commission and wanted to provide details to the Commission. Julia provided there were two elements to the National Commission; there is a National Commission and a separate Foundation. Both groups underwent a recent change in leadership due to controversy in its previous management. The national Commission's work has been heavily focused on Philadelphia, and they have been trying to get away from that and things have improved. Connecticut has done some great work on this; Kate has heard that Virginia has done well also. The Commission voted by show of hands to table the discussion/voting regarding involvement with the National America250 Commission.

Review/Discussion of Program Suggestions and Correspondence Received

The Commission received copies in a packet of suggestions and correspondence that has been received to date. During the meeting, the Commission discussed their interest in the America 250 Commission, its programs, suggestions, and correspondence with individuals like Marie Yarborough from Acadia National Park. Captain Bratton was looking to help coordinate anything at the National Guard level, Jeanette Watts offers a colonial dance program, and the Arnold Expedition Historical Society is looking for program support.

Julia spoke about Machias as a historic site that annually commemorates the Revolutionary War. The Commission discussed a desire to highlight the local stories of the American Revolution, such as naval battles and the Treaty of Watertown celebration. The Treaty of Watertown is the first treaty to be signed with the newly formed United States of America, and was signed by the Maliseet and Micmac tribes; it has not been observed in Maine but is celebrated elsewhere. It's important to remember and learn from these events in history. Bernard suggested the Commission should be more inclusive and learn from the past while focusing on the future.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:26 pm. Kate will send a Doodle Poll to the Commission to schedule a meeting in February.