



Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2025
3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Location: Secretary of State Temporary Offices
17 Elkins Lane, Augusta, ME (Williams Pavilion Building, 2nd Floor) and Zoom

Commission Members Present:

Secretary Shenna Bellows (Chair), Bernard Fishman, Christian Cotz, Libby Bischoff, Julia Gray, Abbe Levin, Kirk Mohny, Beth Lambert, Jamie Rice, Richard LaBelle, Peter Merrill, Alison Maxell (for Lori Fisher)

Commission Members Absent:

Earle Shettleworth, Greg Pierce

Staff in Attendance:

Sarah Hansen, Kate McBrien

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Becky Holt, Penelope Hamlin, Kimberly Smith, Judy Weisman, Julie Potter-Dunlop

Welcome

Secretary Bellows called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests. A quorum was confirmed.

Review and approval of meeting minutes from September 12 and October 8, 2025

Christian Cotz made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, which Abbe Levin seconded. With no objections or abstentions, the motion passed unanimously by those present.

Grant Program Update

The Commission received an update on the Maine Semiquincentennial Grant Program. Sarah reported that the response to the program exceeded expectations, with 121

applications requesting more than \$1 million in total funding, compared to \$110,000 available in awards. As a result, the grant round was highly competitive, featuring a wide range of strong proposals that reflected extensive statewide engagement in Semiquincentennial planning. A Grants Committee has been formed to review applications and conduct detailed deliberations. This committee included both Commission members and staff, who dedicated significant time to reviewing and discussing proposals. Appreciation was expressed for the committee's efforts, as well as for the Maine State Archives and the Maine State Cultural Affairs Council for providing funding that made the program possible. Sarah explained that grant recipients had not yet been notified and that the Commission would hold an executive session to officially vote on the recommended awards, with details kept confidential until notifications are issued. No questions arose during the public portion of the grant discussion.

Maine Atlas Project Update

The Commission received an update on the Maine Atlas Project's status. Sarah reported that a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in October and attracted significant interest, including over 130 questions from potential bidders. Three proposals were ultimately submitted; however, all exceeded the available project budget. Instead of reissuing the RFP and delaying the project due to procurement timelines, a revised plan was developed to keep the project moving forward. A more modular structure has been devised, including hiring or contracting someone to oversee coordination, research accuracy, and narrative consistency, as well as dividing the remaining project components into smaller, manageable segments to be completed by multiple contractors, such as photographers and videographers. The Commission reaffirmed its commitment to proceed with the project despite the revised implementation plan. They discussed the ongoing selection of 250 icons, noting that the full list has not yet been finalized. A selection committee is being formed to review and pre-screen submissions. Several members volunteered to participate, with additional invitations pending. The Commission emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum and minimizing procurement-related delays where possible. Sarah noted that preliminary research and planning materials are already in place to support the upcoming steps.

Logo Use for Commercial Purposes

The Commission discussed a request to use the Maine Semiquincentennial logo for commercial purposes. Members were informed that logo-use applications so far have mostly come from nonprofit organizations and tourism agencies; however, the Commission recently received an application from a commercial wholesaler seeking permission to place the logo on merchandise for its customers. The Commission reviewed the existing

logo application and approval process and noted that the current licensing language does not ban commercial use. Members debated historical examples of commercial use of commemorative logos and the role such items can play in public engagement and long-term historical documentation. Practical considerations were also addressed, including the limited ability to monitor downstream use once a wholesaler is approved and the administrative challenges of restricting specific product types. After the discussion, the Commission considered whether to permit commercial use of the logo under current program standards.

Richard LaBelle moved to approve the commercial use of the Maine Semiquincentennial logo, subject to the applicant's compliance with established program standards. Jamie Rice seconded the motion. Kirk Mohny opposed citing the need for further review. With no abstentions, the motion was approved.

Moments That Made Us Printable Exhibit

Sarah discussed with the Commission an overview of "Moments That Made Us," a print-on-demand, customizable exhibit created through collaboration among several Western state Semiquincentennial commissions. It is inspired by an exhibit currently on display at History Colorado. The exhibit examines the founding ideals of the Declaration of Independence through a thematic approach and is designed for communities, cultural organizations, and educational institutions nationwide. The Commission reviewed the structure of the exhibit, which will feature 26 ready-to-use panels that can be customized to reflect local, regional, or state history. These materials will be available in multiple design formats and are meant to be low-cost and accessible, allowing organizations to adapt and print panels without significant technical or financial barriers. The Commission emphasized that the exhibit is not limited to Revolutionary-era events but offers a wider perspective on civic history and democratic ideals, making it relevant to communities with diverse histories.

Christian Cotz moved to share the 'Moments That Made Us' exhibit templates on the Maine Semiquincentennial website. Julia Gray seconded, but Richard LaBelle opposed, concerned about endorsing or partnering before reviewing the complete exhibit. The motion passed with no abstentions.

2026 Commission Meeting Dates

The Commission reviewed the 2026 meeting schedule, including a change to the regular meeting time to accommodate a scheduling conflict. They agreed to hold meetings on Wednesdays, moving the start to 2:00 pm, lasting until 3:30 pm. The schedule includes meetings in April and May, with no meetings in June or July. Bernard moved to approve the dates and times as presented. Richard LaBelle seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Training For Elected Officials on Maine's Freedom of Access Law

Sarah updated the Commission on Maine's FOAA requirements. Members must review FOAA guidance and confirm understanding via a short certification, which the Commission will keep. No formal training is needed; compliance is by reviewing the FAQ and accreditation. Key FOAA obligations include responding to records requests within five days and coordinating with the Secretary of State's Public Records Office. FOAA records include emails, texts, and other communications related to the Commission's work, even on personal devices. The Commission also reviewed rules for public meetings, executive sessions, and handling records requests. Few requests have been received, and many materials, like minutes and recordings, are already online.

Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

Executive Session

The Commission went into an executive session to discuss grant program awards. The public part of the meeting ended before the executive session.

Adjournment

There being no further business in public session, the meeting was adjourned.