



Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2026

2:00 pm - 3:30 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, Julia Gray, Abbe Levin, Kirk Mohny, Jamie Rice, Richard LaBelle, Peter Merrill, Amy Hausmann

Commission Members Absent:

Earle Shettleworth, Beth Lambert, Libby Bischof, Lori Fisher

Staff in Attendance:

Sarah Hansen, Kate McBrien, Ted

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Judy Weisman, Dan Glover, Pat Claus, Kim Smith, Steve Warren, Julie Potter-Dunlop, Frank Rodriguez, Marie Yarborough, Scott Craig, Catherine Duffy

Welcome

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

Review and approval of meeting minutes from December 10, 2025

Kirk Mohny made a motion to approve the minutes, which Christian Cotz seconded. With no objections or abstentions, the motion passed unanimously by those present.

Maine Semiquincentennial Grant Update

The Commission approved December meeting minutes and received an update on the grant program, which awarded over \$110,000 to 14 recipients. Over 120 applications were

received, requesting over \$1 million in funding. Christian and Bernard praised the grant application and selection processes.

Maine Atlas Project

Sarah provided an update on the Maine Atlas project, highlighting progress in hiring contract staff for content and social media development, and working with Inform ME to develop a website.

Great American State Fair

The Commission discussed the Great American State Fair, a Freedom250 initiative planned for June-July on the National Mall. Details and costs remain unclear. Sarah noted that Maine has not yet received direct outreach about participating in the fair. Greg mentioned he is monitoring communications from state and federal levels for any updates on the Great American State Fair.

America250 Time Capsule

The Commission discussed ideas for items to include as Maine's contribution to the America250 time capsule. Ideas included a lobster gauge or trap, a sweetgrass basket, a copy of the Constitution, and items representing Maine's potato and logging industries. The Commission decided to solicit public input on potential items, with the possibility of voting on the final selection at the next meeting. The group also discussed the possibility of including both tangible items and paper materials, such as a book of postage stamps commemorating Maine's Bicentennial, a poem by the poet laureate, Wabanaki crafts, and other artwork. Sarah will schedule a special meeting of the Commission to further discuss.

National History Day in Maine

National History Day is looking for judges for this year's regional and state contests. The theme this year is: Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History. Sarah will be serving as a judge of the state contest and encourages Commission members to join.

Jane's Walk Maine

The Commission discussed sponsorship for Jane's Walk Maine. Jane's Walk is a global festival of free, volunteer-led walking conversations inspired by community activist Jane Jacobs. They combine the simple act of exploring a place with personal observations, local history, and civic engagement. Last year more than 50 communities across the state hosted walks, and it is expected to grow larger for 2026. Some concerns were expressed about sponsoring with limited funds for core mission activities. Christian Cotz made a

motion to sponsor the Jane's Walk event with a \$500 contribution, seconded by Bernard Fishman. With two opposed, the motion to sponsor was approved.

America 250 Planning Discussion

The Commission discussed their role and activities leading up to commemoration, with Richard expressing concerns about the lack of a clear deliverable and the commission's impact. Sarah explained their focus on amplifying and supporting community efforts, promoting national initiatives, and managing the Main Atlas project. The discussion also briefly touched on future discussions about the commission's goals and potential events.

Pathways to Freedom at Maine Historical Society

The Maine Historical Society is hosting an exhibition called "Pathways to Freedom: Maine Stories of the American Revolution" featuring the Dunlap Broadside, one of 26 surviving copies of the Declaration of Independence. The society will take the document on tour throughout Maine's 16 counties starting July 17th, with stops at various locations including Maine Maritime in Bath and Bowdoin College. The tour will run through Halloween weekend, offering free public access at each site. While there is no specific ask, Commission members are encouraged to help spread the word about the tour and events.

Public Comment

During the Public Comment period Pat Claus discussed the possibility of a statue of Azubah Freedman Ryder being commissioned. She hopes to have the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission logo placed on the statue. Frank Rodriguez discussed the Ice Age Trail app and the possibility of creating something similar for Maine history as part of the Maine Atlas Project.

Adjournment

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