



Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2025

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Location: State Archives offices (17 Elkins Lane, Augusta, ME) and Zoom

Commission Members Present

Secretary Shenna Bellows (Chair), Julia Gray, Kirk Mohny, Bernard Fishman, Peter Merrill, Christian Coates, Earle Shettleworth, Richard LaBelle, Abbe Levin, Alison Maxell (for Lori Fisher), Greg Pierce (for Governor Mills), Christian Cotz

Commission Members Absent:

Marcia Minter, Jamie Kingman-Rice

Staff in Attendance: Sarah Hansen

Members of the Public in Attendance

Bertie Williams, Brian Knoblock, Frank Rodriguez, Jonathan Bratten, Ken Latham, Marie Yarborough, Peggy Konitzky, Penelope Hamblin, Steve Warren, Cathy Moison, Roberta Williams, Kimberly Smith, Jeanette Watts, Christina Bear, James Jackson, Pat Claus, Peggy Konitzky, Scott Craig, Valerie Lamont

Welcome

Secretary Bellows called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests. A quorum was confirmed. Secretary Bellows facilitated introductions from attendees in the room and online, including Commission members, representatives from state agencies, and members of the public.

New Commission Member

Secretary Bellows announced that a new appointment has been made to the Commission: Beth Lambert from the Department of Education. Beth will be sworn in at the next Commission meeting.

Approval of December 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Julia Gray moved to approve the minutes. Kirk Mohny seconded. Secretary Bellows invited corrections. Minor updates included correcting the spelling of Carolann Ouellette from the Maine Office of Tourism and Alison Maxell's name. The minutes were unanimously approved as amended.

Staffing Updates

Secretary Bellows announced that Kate McBrien has been appointed Chief of Staff and Chief Deputy Secretary of State. Christian Cotz will now serve as Interim State Archivist and represent the Archives on the Commission.

Biennial Budget Request & Legislative Update

Secretary Bellows shared that the Commission's \$250,000 request was not included in the Governor's budget proposals. However, Representative Randall Greenwood has agreed to sponsor a bill. Commissioners were encouraged to advocate for its passage. Secretary Bellows emphasized the importance of leveraging partnerships and non-state resources to continue Commission initiatives.

MOT Maine Atlas Project Funding Proposal

Sarah Hansen announced that the Maine Office of Tourism has awarded the Commission \$200,000 in funding for the "Maine Atlas" project. The initiative will highlight 250 unique sites, people, objects, and stories that define the state's identity. Sarah noted that the funding would be distributed in two phases, starting in July 2025. A robust outreach and community engagement campaign is planned, including presence at the Governor's Conference on Tourism, launch of a new website, and the use of storytelling through photography and video. The discussion included questions about project leadership, selection criteria, and strategies for ensuring geographic and cultural representation. Commissioners expressed strong support. Ideas for interactive elements such as passports and Bingo cards for youth were also discussed.

Branding Update (vote)

Sarah presented a revised draft of the Commission's logo, which now includes "1776-2026" for context and clarity. Commissioners discussed the logo's visual impact, relevance to the broader America 250 celebration, and accessibility to the public. Richard LaBelle and Bernard Fishman raised concerns about the use of the term "Semiquincentennial" and the design's lack of reference to a national celebration. Christian Cotz made a motion to approve the logo; Julia Gray seconded the motion. After discussion, the Commission voted 7 yes; 3 no; 1 abstention. The logo was approved for immediate use, with the option to refine the branding collateral in the future.

Two Lights for Tomorrow

Sarah introduced the national "Two Lights for Tomorrow" initiative, which encourages every U.S. state to display two symbolic lights on April 18th as a gesture of unity in commemoration of the anniversary of Paul Revere's ride. Originating in Wisconsin and expanded by Virginia, the campaign allows flexibility in how states participate — from lighting landmarks to hosting full-scale public events. Hansen described the effort as low-cost, accessible, and well-aligned with Maine's commemorative goals.

Secretary Bellows proposed enhancing the initiative locally by integrating Paul Revere Bells, a unique Maine historical connection. She listed several known bell sites across the state and suggested that the Commission endorse the initiative formally and explore coordinated lighting or bell-ringing ceremonies at the State House and beyond.

The Committee discussed and emphasized the importance of inclusive participation, with members suggesting outreach to churches, town halls, historical societies, and local governments. Julia Gray highlighted the complexity of Paul Revere's legacy in Maine, referencing his court-martial after the Penobscot Expedition. She and other members emphasized the importance of accurately contextualizing Maine's Revolutionary War history while engaging communities meaningfully.

Christian Cotz and others noted that the initiative offers local flexibility, enabling communities to shape their involvement based on local history and resources. Earle Shettleworth proposed adding Hallowell to the list of bell sites due to its historical connection to the Revere foundry.

The Committee expressed strong support. Christian Cotz moved to formally participate in the “Two Lights for Tomorrow” campaign; Bernard Fishman seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. The Commission will coordinate communications with the Legislature, towns, and relevant organizations, with Sarah Hansen serving as the primary point of contact for implementation efforts.

Semiquincentennial Survey Result Highlights

Sarah Hansen shared results from the Commission’s stakeholder survey. Respondents expressed interest in partnership opportunities, branding use, and a need for both funding and volunteers to ensure successful events and programming in 2026.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:28 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2025, at 3:00 PM.