



Maine Semiquincentennial Commission 250

Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2024

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

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

Commission Members Present: Secretary Shenna Bellows, Kate McBrien, Gregory Pierce (for Governor Mills), Julia Gray, Kirk Mohny, Bernard Fishman, Marcia Minter, Earle Shettleworth, Ekhlash Ahmed, Peter Merrill, Richard Labelle, Abbe Levin, Kelli Deveaux, Robin Talbot,

Commission Members Absent: Senate President Troy Jackson, Lori Fisher, Kim Smith, Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross

Members of the Public in Attendance: Steve Warren, Sarah Hansen, Janice Teasenfitz, Deputy SOS Joann Bautista

Introductions

Secretary Bellows welcomed the Commission and the public attendees and acknowledged a quorum.

Approval of December 1st, 2023 Meeting Minutes

A correction to the spelling of “semiquincentennial” in the last paragraph of the minutes was made and approved. The minutes, as amended, were approved unanimously.

Review and Discussion of LD 2145

LD 2145 is a bill that aims to expand the membership of the Commission by including representatives from diverse cultural backgrounds. The bill proposes representation from each tribal nation, Franco-American community, Acadian community, and the Jewish community. The State & Local Government Committee passed the bill as a divided report. The proposed per-diem travel rate for meetings hosted by the Semiquincentennial Commission would be \$55 daily and would only apply to public members; state employees would not be available to receive this. To address funding concerns, Kate and Secretary Bellows have reviewed the Archives budget and believe it can cover the committee members' travel expenses. They have requested the Appropriations Committee eliminate the funding request tied to the bill. The hope is that the bill will move off the appropriations table and on to Governor for approval. The tribal representation proposal has received bipartisan support, but the Commission's work currently does not have a significant budget.

Director of Special Projects for the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission

Sarah Hansen has been hired as the Director of Special Projects for the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission. Her job will be to oversee all the programming and activities for the Commission. Sarah has worked in historic preservation in various regions, such as the Pacific, Northwest, and West. She is originally from Maine and is thrilled to start her new role. She is grateful for the opportunity to work with the hiring panel and the Committee and looks forward to the exciting conversations and plans for the event. Sarah will start her work in June 2024. The Commission welcomed Sarah.

National America250 Commission

The National America 250 Commission has launched a contest called "America's Field Trip." The contest aims to encourage students to write about what America means to them and compete for a chance to visit a historic landmark. The Commission considered promoting the program to schools and teachers in Maine. The deadline for the contest is less than four weeks, which makes it challenging for teachers to integrate it at the end of the year. To help with this, the commission can share resources through its networks, such as email blasts to schools and social media postings. Any student, youth, or young person is welcome to participate in the contest, and the Commission can send information through private networks and organizational and individual contacts. The contest pays for the travel expenses of the student and one adult.

The Commission discussed activities, and members suggested having a philosophical conversation about how to, or not, endorse programs. Richard proposed creating a

more concise mission statement that captures the commission's purpose for the public. Bernard recommended convening a subcommittee to formulate this critical statement. Bernard advised caution in redefining the Commission's purpose due to the broad aspects of celebration, memorialization, and historical recollection. Julia suggested forming a subcommittee to draft a more engaging and exciting statement for the commission. Secretary Bellows encouraged anyone interested in participating in a subcommittee to draft a mission and vision statement to volunteer. Bernard, Greg, and Abbe volunteered during the meeting.

Budget and Financial Goals

Secretary Bellows discussed the current program budget of \$50,000, which mainly will cover travel expenses and small tasks such as brochure printing. The Commission discussed their need for a strategy and financial goals. The discussion centered on balancing corporate sponsorship, private foundational support, and public support. Peter shared his experience with State Bicentennial Commission's finances and said they relied on state and private donations. The complex process of dissolving a nonprofit was also discussed, but its benefits were explored as well.

Julia suggested partnering with different nonprofit entities for different parts of the process, such as fundraising, support for local events, and partnering with organizations like the Maine Humanities Council. Bernard favored developing a grant program like the one managed by the Cultural Affairs Council for the Bicentennial, which could support both small and large organizations and accommodate different topics and approaches.

The Commission discussed promoting inclusivity and a nonpartisan approach by establishing communication with all entities across the state and focusing on promoting education, culture, and understanding in different places. The Cultural Affairs Council played a central role in the process during the Maine Bicentennial.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:23 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for June 12th.