

Cabo Verdean Cultural Center Feasibility Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: November 25th, 2025

Time: 4:00PM-5:00PM

Location: Microsoft Teams

Recording: Full video recording available via the Massachusetts Legislature event page:

<https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5490>

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Senator **Liz Miranda**, Co-Chair, called the third meeting of the **Cabo Verdean Cultural Center Feasibility Commission** to order and welcomed commissioners.

She noted:

- This commission has been many years in the making and has moved forward alongside her tenure in the Legislature.
- Commissioners were appointed by the **Governor of the Commonwealth**, the **Mayor of Boston**, the **Speaker of the House**, and the **Senate President**, making this a particularly special body.
- The Commission is charged with developing **recommendations to the Legislature** for the creation of a **Cabo Verdean Cultural Center in the City of Boston**.

Senator Miranda provided an overview of how the Commission will carry out its work over the next year:

- Hold **monthly meetings**
 - Conduct **visits to other cultural institutions**
 - Invite **subject-matter speakers**
 - Host **community listening sessions**
- Ultimately issue an **RFP/contract** for a **feasibility study**, to assess opportunities in Boston and across the Commonwealth

She also contextualized the work:

- Boston will mark **250 years of the nation's founding** next year; the Commission wants to ensure that **over 200 years of Cabo Verdean history in the region** is visible and centered in that narrative.
- 2024 marked **50 years of Cabo Verdean independence**, and the community continues to celebrate, including with participation in the **World Cup**, further highlighting the global visibility of Cabo Verdeans.

Senator Miranda emphasized that this work is “momentous and honorable,” and expressed confidence that after a year the Commission will present a strong, forward-looking proposal for the Commonwealth.

2. Meeting Purpose

The Chair clarified that the primary purposes of this meeting were:

1. To **approve the minutes** of the November 6 commission meeting; and
2. To begin **consideration and selection of up to 15 additional commissioners** to be recommended/appointed, while also discussing roles for community partners (e.g., Cabo Verdean clubs and associations) who may not serve as formal commissioners but can still

support the work.

Commissioners received:

- The meeting agenda
- Draft minutes from the **November 6** meeting
- An abridged list of **recommended additional commissioners** and their bios

3. Roll Call & Attendance

Roll call was conducted by **Rashelle** (staff, Office of Sen. Miranda).

Commission Members Present

(As reflected during roll call and subsequent introductions)

- Senator **Liz Miranda**, Co-Chair – Present
- Representative **Kip Diggs**, Co-Chair – Present
- Representative **Tony Cabral** – Present
- Representative **Rita Mendes** – Present
- Senator **Dylan Fernandes** – Absent
- Senator **Michael Brady** – Present
- Senator **Patrick O’Connor** – Present
- Representative **David Vieira** – Present
- Commissioner **Manuel “Manny” Lopes** – Present
- Commissioner **Monica Vega** – Present

Staff Present

- **Elizabeth Vater**– District Director, Office of Senator O’Connor
- **Irodina Abreu** – Staff, Office of Representative Tony Cabral
- **Matthew Connelly** – Legislative Director, Office of Senator Dylan Fernandes
- **Rashelle Centeio** - District Director, Office of Senator Liz Miranda).

Additional commissioners and staff joined over the course of the meeting and were recorded for attendance purposes. A quorum was confirmed.

4. Transparency & Public Process

Senator Miranda reiterated that:

- The Commission’s work is a **transparent and public process**.
- Future meetings will have links posted on the **Massachusetts Legislature website**.
- The Commission intends to increase **outbound communications** so that members of the public and community stakeholders can observe and engage.

(The official video recording linked above serves as the full audiovisual record of this meeting.)

5. Review & Approval of November 6 Minutes

Senator Miranda summarized key points from the **November 6** meeting minutes:

After review, Senator Miranda asked for:

- A **motion** to approve the November 6 minutes.

- A **second**, followed by a vote.
Motion: To approve the minutes of the November 6, 2024 meeting of the Cabo Verdean Cultural Center Feasibility Commission.
Action: Motion made and seconded.
Vote: Passed by voice vote. Commissioners David Viera and Manny Lopes, who were not present at the November 6 meeting, voted “present” rather than “yes” or “no.” The Chair and commissioners briefly discussed how “present” votes affect the count; it was confirmed that this is acceptable for purposes of approving the minutes.
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6. Discussion: Expansion of Commission Membership

6.1 Overview of Process & Considerations

Senator Miranda outlined the process used to compile the list of **recommended additional commissioners**:

- Over the last several years, her office collected names of individuals who:
 - Expressed interest in serving,
 - Were highlighted by community members, or
 - Represented important regional or sectoral perspectives.
 - The current list had been sent twice to commissioners for review, and commissioners were invited to submit **additional recommendations**.
 - Up to **15 additional commissioners** may be appointed under the enabling legislation.
- Guiding considerations for the expanded membership include:

- **Geographic diversity** (Boston, New Bedford, Brockton, Plymouth, Cape Cod, South Coast, Wareham/Onset, Taunton, etc.)
- **Sector diversity**, including:
 - Arts, culture, and history
 - Academia and education
 - Philanthropy and fundraising
 - Construction, real estate, and development
 - Law and governance
 - Community organizing and advocacy
- **Generational diversity** within the Cabo Verdean community (first-generation immigrants, multi-generation Cabo Verdean-Americans, veterans, etc.)
- Connections to key institutions (e.g., **Bridgewater State University’s Pedro Pires Institute for Cape Verdean Studies**, cultural museums, municipalities, and associations).

The Chair stressed the importance of:

- Having at least **one commissioner from each major community** with significant Cabo Verdean presence, so that local history and stories can be effectively “extrapolated.”
- Ensuring the Commission includes people with **practical skills** needed to eventually **site, fund, build, and curate** a cultural center.

6.2 Summary of Candidate Pool

The Chair briefly summarized the backgrounds of individuals on the recommendation list (bios had been circulated in writing), including but not limited to:

- **John Cruz** – Developer/business leader (Cruz Companies) with roots in Boston and New Bedford; longstanding involvement in construction and community development.
- **Former Senator Viriato “Vinny” deMacedo** – Former state senator, now at Bridgewater State University; legislative experience and ties to Plymouth and surrounding communities.
- **Angelo Lopes Barbosa** – Academic and musician, currently leading the Center for Cape Verdean Studies at Bridgewater State University (Pedro Pires Institute); deep knowledge of Cabo Verdean history, language, and music.
- **Josephine “Djofa” Tavares & Manuel da Luz Gonçalves** – Educators and authors of the Cabo Verdean-English dictionaries; early leaders in Cabo Verdean dual-language education and a former Roxbury-based cultural center.
- **Barbara Burgos** – Founder/curator of the **Cape Cod Cabo Verdean Museum & Cultural Center** (Harwich/Falmouth area), key resource for Cape Verdean history on Cape Cod and the Islands.
- **Former Representative Evandro Carvalho** – Attorney, former state representative for the Fifth Suffolk district, now leading the Office of Police Accountability for the City of Boston; authored the original bond authorization and legislation that created this Commission.
- **Sydné Marrow** – Chief of Staff to the former Mayor of Brockton; representative of the diaspora and the rapidly growing Cabo Verdean community in Brockton.
- **Gene Costa & John “Buddy” Andrade** – Historians and community organizers connected to New Bedford, Wareham/Onset, and broader veteran communities (including service memorials).
- **Lúcia Soraya Dos Santos** – Maternal wellness advocate and birthkeeper from New Bedford.
- **Dr. Mina (Berklee)** – Professor at Berklee College of Music; educator and former president of the Cabo Verdean Association in Boston; strong link to music, arts, and higher education.
- **Ana Fidalgo** – Entrepreneur and restaurateur; early founder of Radio Nha Terra; deep community ties and history in Boston.
- **Elson Fortes** – Artist and designer based in Boston/Dorchester, blending fashion and cultural storytelling.
- **Colleen Fonseca** – Real estate professional and former leader of the Builders of Color Coalition; experience with development, supplier diversity, and cross-state networks.
- **Candida Rose** – New Bedford-based artist and cultural advocate known for preserving Cabo Verdean musical traditions and performing national anthems.
- **Councilor Maria T. Tavares** – Brockton City Councillor and long-time community leader.
- **Dina Dray** – Community leader and educator connected to **Scituate**, with ties to Cabo Verdean communities from Santa Catarina/Fogo and local July 5th celebrations.
- **Michael Lopes** – Law enforcement professional from Braintree/Cohasset with a 30+ year career in policing.

Additional names mentioned during discussion:

- **Former Councilor Tina Cardoso** – Founder of Cabo Verdeans United, former mayoral candidate.
- **Maria Gomes Pina** – Brockton-based community leader and business owner with strong connections to national and local officials in Cabo Verde.

6.3 Questions & Concerns Raised by Commissioners

Key points raised:

- **Comfort with Voting / Public Record**
 - Some commissioners expressed discomfort voting “yes” or “no” on individuals they do not personally know, particularly given the public nature of the vote and recording.
 - Concern that a “no” or abstention could be misinterpreted as a lack of confidence in highly qualified candidates rather than a lack of familiarity.
- **Need for a Skills & Representation Inventory**
 - Commissioner **Manny Lopes** recommended creating an **objective inventory/matrix** listing:
 - Region
 - Gender
 - Sector/skills (arts, history, fundraising, construction, etc.)
 - Generation (recent immigrant vs. second/third generation)
 - This would allow commissioners to clearly see **where there is overlap and where there are gaps.**
- **Geographic Balance**
 - Commissioners emphasized the need for representation from:
 - **Taunton, Wareham/Onset**, and additional South Coast communities
 - **Boston** (as the likely site of the cultural center)
- **Sector/Skill Gaps**
 - The Chair noted the potential need for:
 - **A cultural curator/museum professional**
 - Someone connected to the **Ernestina** project
- **Ex Officio / Advisory Structure**
 - The Commission revisited the idea of creating an **ex officio advisory group**, potentially composed of:
 - Presidents/boards of **Cabo Verdean associations and clubs**
 - Leaders of existing/emerging museums and cultural centers
- **Process Preference (Slate vs. Individual Votes)**
 - Some favored a **slate** developed by the Chair’s office; others preferred **individual votes** guided by the inventory.

7. Motions & Votes on Additional Commissioners

7.1 Consideration of Non-Citizen Eligibility

Regarding **Angelo Lopes Barbosa**, commissioners briefly raised the question of whether a **non-U.S. citizen** may serve on the Commission. The Chair indicated:

- Counsel’s guidance has been requested but not yet received.
- To preserve representation from the Pedro Pires Institute, the seat should be listed as **“Angelo Lopes Barbosa or designee from the Pedro Pires Center for Cape Verdean Studies at Bridgewater State University.”**
- The Chair will confirm eligibility with counsel and report back at the next meeting.

7.2 Votes Taken

Initial votes:

1. **Motion:** Appoint **John Cruz (Cruz Companies)** as a commissioner.
 - **Action:** Motion made and seconded.
 - **Vote:** Passed by voice vote (majority “aye,” no objections recorded).
2. **Motion:** Appoint **former Senator Viriato “Vinny” deMacedo** (Bridgewater State University, Plymouth) as a commissioner.
 - **Action:** Motion made and seconded.
 - **Vote:** Passed by voice vote (majority “aye,” no objections recorded).
3. **Motion:** Appoint **Angelo Lopes Barbosa or designee** from the **Pedro Pires Center for Cape Verdean Studies** as a commissioner.
 - **Action:** Motion made and seconded.
 - **Vote:** Passed by voice vote (majority “aye”; concerns noted regarding citizenship; counsel opinion pending).

Because of process concerns, the Commission then refined its approach:

Motion 1 (Confirm those three appointments):

To **affirm and accept** the three appointments already voted:

- John Cruz
- Former Senator Viriato “Vinny” deMacedo
- Angelo Lopes Barbosa or designee from the Pedro Pires Center for Cape Verdean Studies

Action: Motion made (Rep. Cabral) and seconded (Rep. Diggs).

Vote:

- 5 “yes”: Senator Brady, Representative Mendes, Senator O’Connor, Representative Cabral, Representative Diggs
- 1 “no”: Monica Veiga
- 2 **reserved rights** (neither yes nor no, due to limited familiarity): Manny Lopes, Representative Viera,

Outcome: Motion **passed**.

Motion 2 (Pause additional appointments):

To **pause voting on the remaining recommended commissioners** until the next meeting.

Action: **Motion Made (Rep Cabral) and Seconded (Manny Lopes)**

Vote:

- 7 “yes,”: Representative Cabral, Representative Mendes, Manny Lopes, Monica Veiga, Senator Brady, Senator O’Connor, Rep Cabral
- 1 “no.”: Representative Diggs

Outcome: Motion **passed**.

Motion 3 (Inventory & process):

To direct the **Chair and staff** to:

- Develop an **inventory/matrix** of candidates including geography, generation, and sector/skills;
- Compare candidates against the Commission’s needs; and
- Return at the next meeting with this document to guide further appointments.

Action: Motion made (Commissioner Manny Lopes), seconded (Senator O’Connor).

Vote: Unanimous “yes.”

Outcome: Motion **passed**.

After these actions:

- The three confirmed appointees will be notified.
- The remaining **12 seats** (up to 15) will be considered at the **next meeting** using the inventory.

8. Next Steps & Action Items

Chair & Staff:

1. **Send appointment letters** to:
 - John Cruz
 - Former Senator Viriato “Vinny” deMacedo
 - Angelo Lopes Barbosa or designee
2. **Develop an inventory/matrix** of all recommended candidates, including:
 - Geography/municipality
 - Sector/skills
 - Generational experience
 - Other relevant context
3. **Identify gaps**, including:
 - Representation from **Taunton** and **Wareham/Onset**
 - A **cultural curator/museum professional**
 - A contact connected to the **Ernestina**
4. **Incorporate new names** suggested at this meeting (e.g., **Tina Cardoso, Maria Gomes Pina**).
5. **Draft a proposed ex officio/advisory structure** for association leaders and cultural institutions.
6. **Schedule the next meeting in January** (date TBD) and circulate the inventory in advance.

Commissioners:

- Review the inventory once circulated and prepare for discussion/votes on remaining appointments.

- Submit any additional recommendations that may help fill the identified gaps.
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9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made (Rep. Cabral) and seconded (Sen. O'Connor).

- **Vote:** Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Senator Miranda wished everyone a **Happy Thanksgiving** and safe travels, especially to those joining the delegation to **Cabo Verde** with Bridgewater State University. She noted that she, Rep. Diggs, and staff would use the coming weeks to prepare the inventory and next steps.

Meeting adjourned at: 5:10PM