

Cabo Verdean Cultural Center Feasibility Commission

Meeting Minutes (Draft)

Date: January 13th, 2026

Time: Approximately 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

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

<https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5520>

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Attendance & Roll Call

Roll Call: 13 people present/recorded (7 required for quorum). **Quorum met.**

- Senator Liz Miranda — **Yes**
- Senator Patrick M. O'Connor — **Yes**
- Senator Michael D. Brady — **Yes**
- Senator Dylan A. Fernandes — **Yes**
- Representative Antonio F. D. Cabral — **Yes**
- Representative Kip A. Diggs — **Yes**
- Representative Rita A. Mendes — **No**
- Representative David T. Vieira — **Yes**
- Manuel Lopes — **Yes**
- Monica Veiga — **Yes**
- Senator Vinny DeMacedo — **No**
- Angelo Lopes — **Yes**
- John Cruz III — **Yes**

Legislative Staff Present

- Irondina “Dina” Reis Abreu - Rep. Cabral’s office
- Tobias Cowans - Senator Brady’s Office
- Elizabeth Vater - Senator O’Connor’s Office
- Zach Crowley - Senator Fernandes’ Office
- Rashelle Centeio - Senator Miranda’s Office

Chair Senator Liz Miranda called the meeting to order and welcomed commissioners and attendees.

Introductions:

- New/returning members introduced themselves and shared brief remarks, including Commissioner John Cruz (developer; New Bedford ties) and Commissioner Angelo Barbosa (Bridgewater State University Center for Cape Verdean Studies).
 - Chair highlighted the importance of the Commission’s mandate, public process, and the timeline to complete the feasibility study.
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2. Review & Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes referenced during the meeting (noted in discussion as prior minutes dated **November 25**; transcript includes “26” in error).

Motion: Approve the prior meeting minutes (November 25).

Moved by: Representative Cabral

Seconded by: John Cruz

Vote: Motion carried (unanimous; no opposition or abstentions noted).

3. Public Process & Transparency

The Chair reiterated that Commission meetings are part of the Commonwealth’s public boards and commissions process. The Commission plans to:

- Continue posting materials and updates publicly (including via social media and the Commission’s webpage).
- Provide time for public comment at meetings and gather input through listening sessions.

4. Membership Expansion: Nomination Criteria Document

Staff (Rashelle) presented a **Draft Nomination Criteria** document intended to guide expansion of membership (up to 15 total commissioners). The Commission discussed the need for a slate that ensures both:

- **Representation:** geography (Boston, South Coast, Plymouth County, Wareham/Onset, MetroWest, North Shore, Cape Cod, etc.), gender, and generational perspectives; and
- **Functional expertise:** skills needed to plan a cultural center and oversee a feasibility study.

Key “designated organization” representation discussed as important to include:

- Pedro Pires Institute / Center for Cape Verdean Studies (Bridgewater State University)
- Mili Mila (language preservation and accessible Kriolu learning)
- Schooner Ernestina-Morrissey Advisory Board (maritime history, migration, restoration work)
- New Bedford Whaling Museum (exhibitions/archival and museum expertise)

Skills/sector categories noted in the criteria document:

Arts/cultural programming; history/cultural preservation; museum/cultural institutions; architecture/construction/real estate; fundraising/philanthropy; nonprofit management/governance; higher education; language preservation; community organizing/advocacy; economic development; government/policy; legal expertise; marketing/communications.

Edits/Clarifications:

- The Chair requested **Cape Cod** be explicitly included in the geographic representation section.

Motion: Approve the Nomination Criteria document with the addition of Cape Cod.

Moved by: Manny Lopes

Seconded by: Representative Kip Diggs

Vote: Motion carried (no opposition or abstentions noted).

5. Proposed Commissioner Suggestions: Review of Candidate Inventory

The Chair reviewed a compiled list of proposed nominees. The Commission noted:

- Three individuals had already been selected and accepted (John Cruz, Angelo Barbosa, and former Senator DeMacedo)
- The Commission is seeking to fill **up to 12 additional seats** (maximum membership is 15; Commission is not required to fill all seats).

The Chair emphasized that individuals not selected for Commission seats may still meaningfully participate through:

- public meetings/comment,
- listening sessions,
- site visits to cultural institutions, and
- a planned parallel “associations” body for Cabo Verdean community organizations.

Discussion highlights / gaps raised:

- **Legal expertise:** Commissioners flagged a potential gap; Rep. Ivandro Carvalho was noted as an attorney, but questions were raised about whether his current role could create ethics constraints.
- **Regional gaps:** Need to ensure representation from **Taunton** and additional communities (e.g., Wareham/Onset, Cape Cod).
- General appreciation for the thoroughness of the criteria and inventory documents.

6. Process for Finalizing the Slate: Nominating Committee

To address concerns about public voting and varied familiarity with nominees, commissioners discussed creating a **small nominating committee** to:

- review the spreadsheet/inventory against criteria,
- identify gaps,
- recommend a final slate of **12 nominees** for a vote at a future meeting.

Suggestion (Rep. Viera): Form a nominating committee to narrow the list and return a vetted slate for Commission action at the next meeting.

Support for this approach was expressed by multiple members (including Senator O'Connor and others).

Motion: Establish a nominating committee consisting of:

- Chair Senator Liz Miranda
- Commissioner Monica Vega
- Commissioner Manny Lopes

Moved by: Rep. Viera

Seconded by: Several others: Rep Cabral, Rep Diggs, and other unrecognized voices in transcript

Acceptance: Commissioners Vega and Lopes agreed to serve (with scheduling constraints noted).

Vote: Motion carried.

Motion: Close nominations for the nominating committee.

Moved by: Rep Cabral

Seconded by: Rep. Viera

Vote: Motion carried.

7. Scheduling Next Meeting & Next Steps

Representative Cabral urged the Commission to hold an additional meeting **before the February meeting** to finalize appointments and avoid delays.

Agreed next steps (as stated by the Chair):

1. Staff and Chair will coordinate with the nominating committee to meet and refine the recommended slate.
2. Staff will circulate a **Doodle poll** to schedule a meeting **by the end of the month** for a voting session on appointments.
3. Upon vote, staff will send appointment letters and confirm membership so the Commission can proceed with its work plan.

Additional nomination suggestion raised:

- Representative Cabral suggested potential Taunton-area nominees from the **Grassa family** (educators and cultural contributors), as a possible avenue to strengthen Taunton representation.

8. Adjournment

Motion: Adjourn the meeting.

Moved by: Manny Lopes

Seconded by: Representative Diggs

Vote: Motion carried.

Adjourned: Approximately 10:56 AM

Action Items (Summary)

- **Staff/Chair:** Schedule nominating committee meeting (evening availability noted for Commissioner Vega).

- **Nominating Committee:** Review candidate inventory vs. criteria; identify gaps (legal expertise, Taunton representation, etc.); propose slate of up to 12 nominees.
- **Staff:** Send Doodle poll to schedule an additional voting meeting before February.