

# **Cabo Verdean Cultural Center Feasibility Commission**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Monday, July 13, 2026

**Time:** 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Virtual Meeting (Teams)

**Recording:** <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5733>

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### **I. Call to Order & Roll Call**

- Senator Liz Miranda - No
- Senator Dylan Fernandes - No
- Senator Michael Brady - No
- Manny Lopes - Yes
- Senator Patrick M. O'Connor - No
- Representative Kip Diggs - No
- Representative Antonio Cabral - No
- Representative Rita Mendes - Yes
- Representative David T. Vieira - Yes
- Professor Monica Veiga - Yes
- John Cruz III - No
- Former Senator Virato “Vinny” deMacedo - Yes
- Angelo Lopes Barbosa - Yes
- Tanya Lobo - Yes
- Josephine “Djofa” Tavares - Yes
- Professor Abel Djassi Amado - Yes
- Former Representative Evandro Carvalho - Yes
- Barbara Monteiro Burgo - Yes
- Former Councilor Tina Cardoso - No
- Tchintcia Barros - No
- Dina Dray - Yes
- Ana Fidalgo - No
- Jeanne Maria Costa - Yes
- Dr. Aminah Pilgrim - Yes

### **Staff Present**

- Grigsby Lovas, Office of Representative Kip Diggs
- Irondina “Dina” Reis Abreu, Office of Representative Antonio Cabral
- Zach Crowley, Office of Senator Dylan Fernandes
- Elizabeth Vader, Office of Senator Patrick M. O'Connor
- Rashelle Centeio, Office of Senator Liz Miranda

### **II. Approval of June Meeting Minutes**

Rashelle Centeio provided a summary of the Commission’s June 8, 2026 meeting.

**Motion:** Jeanne Maria Costa moved to approve the June 8, 2026 meeting minutes.

**Second:** Manny Lopes seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The motion passed without opposition.

### **III. Debrief of President José Maria Neves’s Visit**

Commissioners reflected on the recent State House visit by His Excellency José Maria Neves, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

Rashelle confirmed that [photographs from the visit had been shared by email](#) and asked commissioners to credit photographer Sa'id Cardoso when posting them.

Commissioners described the visit as meaningful and well organized, highlighting the participation of young people and multiple generations of Cabo Verdean families. Members also discussed how Cabo Verde's World Cup participation has strengthened cultural pride, increased interest in tourism, and created opportunities to engage younger generations.

Jeanne Maria Costa offered to share President Neves's interview with the *New Bedford Light* and noted her continued connections with organizations preserving Cabo Verdean history in New Bedford. Monica Veiga encouraged the Commission to maintain those relationships and to remain mindful of culturally appropriate forms of address when engaging Cabo Verdean elders and dignitaries.

#### **IV. Subcommittee Updates**

Before beginning the individual subcommittee reports, Rashelle Centeio shared several overarching themes and common topics that emerged across the subcommittee meetings.

- Commissioners noted the tremendous sense of pride generated by Cabo Verde's historic FIFA World Cup run and discussed how the increased visibility of Cabo Verde presents a unique opportunity to engage the community and build momentum around the Commission's work.
- Several subcommittees also requested additional clarity regarding the Commission's statutory responsibilities, reporting timeline, and expectations for each subcommittee to ensure their work remains aligned with the legislative charge.
- Another recurring topic was the importance of identifying potential locations for the future Cultural Center, including exploring available sites in the City of Boston and researching existing cultural center models throughout Massachusetts. Rashelle shared that Senator Miranda's office has begun requesting information from the City of Boston regarding vacant parcels that may warrant future consideration.

#### **Communications and Outreach Subcommittee**

The Communications and Outreach Subcommittee discussed developing a consistent **elevator pitch** that all commissioners can use to explain:

- The purpose of the Commission.
- The Commission's statutory charge.
- The work currently underway.
- Ways the community can participate.

The subcommittee also discussed using upcoming Cabo Verdean festivals and community events to raise awareness of the Commission and gather public feedback. Members proposed creating a flyer that would include information about the Commission and, when available, a QR code linking to the community survey.

Josephine “Djofa” Tavares offered to distribute materials from her table at an upcoming community event.

Upcoming outreach opportunities discussed included Cabo Verdean festivals in Onset and Boston during the weekend of August 8 and 9.

The subcommittee also discussed establishing a social media presence to:

- Share updates about the Commission’s work.
- Communicate with community members.
- Publicize listening sessions and surveys.
- Demonstrate that the Cultural Center is being planned with and for the community.

A future social media initiative may introduce each commissioner through individual profile posts. Commissioners will be asked to submit updated biographies and headshots because some publicly available biographies may be outdated.

This group plans to meet again on July 23rd and again as needed.

### **Survey and Data Collection Subcommittee**

The Survey and Data Collection Subcommittee agreed to meet weekly on Tuesdays.

The subcommittee’s immediate priority is developing a survey to gather community feedback about the proposed Cultural Center, including the programs, services and features community members would like it to provide.

The subcommittee also discussed collecting reliable demographic information regarding the number and geographic distribution of Cabo Verdeans living in Massachusetts and throughout the United States. This information could help demonstrate the need for the Cultural Center and support future funding proposals.

Additional priorities include:

- Identifying Cabo Verdean businesses, civic organizations and community associations.
- Determining how these organizations can participate in the Commission’s work.
- Conducting targeted listening sessions with business owners, civic leaders and community organizations.
- Documenting the number of people served and the programs currently offered by existing Cabo Verdean organizations.
- Identifying potential community partners and future fundraising networks.

### **Organizational Development Subcommittee**

Former Representative Evandro Carvalho provided the update for the Organizational Development Subcommittee. The subcommittee currently has a limited number of members and encouraged additional commissioners to participate.

The subcommittee discussed its role in examining possible organizational and legal structures for the Cultural Center.

The subcommittee will examine governance structures, management responsibilities and the Center’s long-term relationship with state government.

Members also discussed funding options, including:

- State appropriations.
- Private philanthropy.
- Corporate sponsorships.

- Individual donors.
- Public-private partnerships.
- Support from prominent individuals of Cabo Verdean descent.

Because elected officials and government employees may face legal or ethical restrictions related to fundraising, the subcommittee emphasized the importance of recruiting members who can participate in resource-development activities without creating a conflict of interest.

The subcommittee plans to meet every two weeks. Its next steps include establishing two to four primary objectives, identifying specific tasks and creating a work plan aligned with the Commission's reporting deadline.

The current statutory deadline was discussed as December 2026, although Senator Miranda's office continues to pursue an extension.

### **History and Culture Subcommittee**

Jeanne Maria Costa presented notes prepared by Dr. Aminah Pilgrim.

The subcommittee emphasized the urgency of preserving Cabo Verdean history while the Commission addresses organizational, financial and logistical questions. Members noted that elders and community historians are passing away, making it essential to begin recording oral histories as soon as possible.

The subcommittee discussed examining practices used by the Massachusetts Historical Society, including traveling "roadshow" events where community members can:

- Bring historical documents and photographs to be scanned.
- Participate in brief oral-history interviews.
- Share artifacts and family records.
- Learn how to preserve historical materials.

The subcommittee noted that significant Cabo Verdean archival collections already exist at institutions and within private collections. Institutions identified included:

- The University of Rhode Island.
- Bridgewater State University.
- The Cape Verdean Institute.
- The New Bedford Whaling Museum.
- Collections maintained by individual commissioners and community historians.

Jeanne Maria Costa emphasized the importance of immediate documentation. She shared that a documentary she produced approximately seven years ago featured ten community members, eight of whom have since passed away.

The subcommittee discussed possible features of the Cultural Center, including:

- A performance space with a stage and room for musical instruments and drumming.
- A small art gallery.
- Interactive historical exhibits.
- A library and research area.
- Space to view video and audio recordings and oral histories.
- Areas for displaying and teaching traditional arts and crafts.
- A teaching kitchen to preserve and showcase Cabo Verdean culinary traditions.
- Rotating exhibits, potentially highlighting a different island each month.
- A projection room for documentaries, films, sporting events and community programming.

- Flexible space for educational and cultural activities.

Members also emphasized the importance of visiting existing museums and cultural centers to examine their physical layouts and programming models.

## V. Next Steps

### Site Visits

The Commission discussed arranging its first group site visit in August.

Possible locations included:

- The Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center.
- The Cape Verdean Association in New Bedford.
- La CASA, a recently opened Latino community and cultural space in Boston's South End.
- The Cape Verdean Museum in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.
- Cabo Verdean historical and cultural locations in Scituate.

Members recommended visiting La CASA because of its classrooms, community spaces, artwork, artifacts and mural. She also suggested speaking with those involved in developing the Center to learn about their planning process.

Members also recommended the Cape Verdean Museum in Pawtucket. Members described it as a completed, multilevel facility containing exhibits, classroom space, historical timelines, artifacts and a library. Commissioners with relationships to the museum offered to help coordinate a visit.

Dina Dray discussed Scituate's strong Cabo Verdean community and its Sister City relationship with Santa Catarina do Fogo. She reported that the community is working to bring the schooner *Ernestina-Morrissey* to Scituate and is exploring the development of a Cabo Verdean heritage trail modeled after other local historic trails.

Members agreed to tentatively reserve **Friday, August 14, 2026**, for a site visit. Rashelle will contact the organizations discussed and determine which location can accommodate the Commission.

Additional site visits will be planned in the future.

### Community Listening Sessions

The Commission discussed beginning public listening sessions in September. Rashelle initially proposed holding a session at the Massachusetts State House.

Commissioners emphasized that the Commission should also bring listening sessions directly into communities. Members noted that transportation, familiarity and comfort may prevent some community members from attending an event at the State House.

Potential listening-session locations and partners included:

- Scituate Harbor Community Building.
- UMass Dartmouth and its Cabo Verdean Student Association.
- UMass Boston.
- Youth and teen centers in Dorchester.
- Cape Verdean community organizations throughout Massachusetts.
- Local businesses and restaurants.

- Existing cultural and civic organizations.

Commissioners strongly supported engaging young people, including high school and college students. Members noted that the World Cup has created increased interest in Cabo Verdean identity among younger generations and that the Commission should take advantage of this momentum.

The Commission discussed holding both open community sessions and targeted sessions for specific groups, including:

- Young people.
- Elders.
- Business owners.
- Cultural and civic organizations.
- Cape Verdean associations.
- Educators and researchers.
- Residents from different regions of Massachusetts.

Manny Lopes recommended using a trained facilitator to ensure that each session remains focused, meaningful and well documented.

The Commission also discussed the potential need for:

- Facilitators.
- Translators or interpreters.
- Food and refreshments.
- Note-takers.
- Data collection support.
- Professional report-writing assistance.

Rashelle reported that Governor Maura Healey had signed the budget containing the Commission's \$125,000 allocation. However, the Commission may not receive access to the funding until approximately October 2026.

Former Representative Evandro Carvalho recommended using a portion of the funds to retain a consultant with experience in community engagement, data analysis and report preparation. He emphasized the importance of producing a professional final report within the Commission's statutory timeline.

Members also discussed whether commissioners or organizations connected to commissioners would be eligible to provide paid professional services. Rashelle will seek legal and ethics guidance regarding potential conflicts of interest before any procurement or contracting process begins.

## **VI. New Business**

### **WhatsApp Group**

Senator Miranda created a WhatsApp group for commissioners.

The group may be used for informal communication, including:

- Meeting reminders.
- Community-event announcements.
- General information sharing.

- Non-deliberative conversation.

To remain compliant with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, commissioners were reminded that the WhatsApp group may not be used to deliberate, conduct Commission business or make decisions.

Commissioners who have not received an invitation should send their telephone number directly to Rashelle.

### **Future Meeting Schedule**

The Commission discussed establishing a consistent monthly meeting schedule. Because the second Monday of each month creates a recurring conflict for at least one commissioner, members agreed to move the next meeting to the third Monday of August.

The next full Commission meeting was scheduled for:

**Monday, August 17, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.**

A formal calendar invitation will be distributed.

### **VII. Adjournment**

**Motion:** Manny Lopes moved to adjourn the meeting.

**Second:** Jeanne Maria Costa seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The motion passed without opposition.

The meeting was adjourned.

### **Upcoming events:**

- **Saturday, July 18th:** 8th Annual Harwich Cape Verdean Festival (Rain Date July 19th), 1 Oak Street, Harwich MA, 02645
- **Saturday, July 25th:** Cabo Verdeans 5K / Walk / Kids Run (Pawtucket), Max Read Field
- 540 Pleasant Street, Pawtucket, RI US 02860
- **Saturday, July 25th:** The Cape Verdean American Legacy: Celebrating 250 Years of Nation Building. India Point Park (Fox Point) 201 India St, Providence RI 02903 | 2pm-6PM
- **Saturday, July 25th:** CV Celebration Day: Join the Carnival Parade, Meeting Spot 575 N. Montello Street, Brockton MA @ 4PM
- **Sunday, July 26th:** Brockton Cape Verdean Day Celebration, Brockton Rox Stadium 1 Feinberg Way, Brockton MA, 02301 | 3M
- Saturday August 1st: 2nd Edition Expo Krioula, Local Business Exhibition | 110 School Street, Pawtucket RI, 02860
- **Thursday, August 6th:** Cabo Verde Celebration at Fenway Park
- **Saturday, August 8th:** Onset Cape Verdean Festival
- **Sunday, August 9th:** Cabo Verde Independence Festival, Boston City Hall Plaza 2pm-10pm
- **Saturday August 15th:** African Festival of Boston; Boston Commons 9am-8:30pm

- **Saturday, August 22nd:** 50 Anos Carreira Zeca de Nha Reinalda, Strand Theatre, Columbia Road, Boston, MA 6 PM - 10 PM
- **Saturday, August 22nd:** Katxupa Festival: A Celebration of Cape Verdean Gastronomy, Culture, & Community | 120 High Street, Pawtucket RI (\$10 a ticket)
- **Sunday, September 6th:** Nha Tera Nha Kretchêu-Festival at Festival Pier Pawtucket RI