

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 2 OF THE CITY CODE TO CREATE AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

#0172

Sponsor:

Council
Member
Darby

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington has been deeply shaped by the history, labor, creativity, and leadership of African Americans; and

WHEREAS, African American neighborhoods, institutions, cultural sites, and oral histories have historically faced erasure, displacement, underinvestment, and exclusion from formal preservation efforts; and

WHEREAS, the preservation of African American history and culture is essential to racial equity, intergenerational knowledge, community healing, and inclusive city planning; and

WHEREAS, Wilmington has an obligation to recognize, protect, and elevate Black history as a permanent and integral part of the City's identity, development, and future; and

WHEREAS, community-centered advisory bodies provide meaningful opportunities for residents, historians, artists, elders, youth, and cultural workers to shape public policy and preservation strategies; and

WHEREAS, City Council deems it necessary and appropriate to adopt a permanent African American History and Cultural Preservation Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 2 of the City Code is hereby amended by repealing Chapter 2, Division 10 ("African American History Museum Foundation"), Sections 2-148 and 2-149 in their entirety.

SECTION 2. Chapter 2 of the City Code is hereby amended by adding in the following underlined language.

DIVISION 10. – AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION.

Sec. 2-148. – Establishment; Membership; Meetings

(a) **Establishment.** There is hereby established a standing advisory body known as the African American History and Cultural Preservation Commission. The Commission's purpose shall be to advise the Mayor, City Council, and relevant City departments on policies, programs, and initiatives that preserve, protect, document and promote African American history, culture, landmarks, and lived experiences in Wilmington. The Commission shall be guided by principles of racial equity, community-centered decision-making, transparency, and respect for lived experience, ancestral knowledge, and cultural heritage.

(b) **Composition.** The Board shall be composed of thirteen (13) voting members. Seven (7) members shall be appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of City Council. Six (6) members shall be appointed by the President of City Council, with no more than two (2) members recommended by any single Councilmember. The Director of Land Use and Planning, or their designee, shall serve as a non-voting liaison. Appointments shall reflect geographic, generational, and professional diversity, and may include:

- i. Local historians, archivists, and educators;
- ii. Community elders and culture bearers;
- iii. Artists, cultural workers, and tradition keepers;
- iv. Residents of historically Black neighborhoods; or
- v. One young adult representative between the ages of 18–25.

(c) **Terms.** Members shall serve three (3) staggered terms. Three of the Mayor's appointees shall serve (3) year terms; two Mayoral appointees shall serve two (2) year terms; and two Mayoral appointments shall serve one (1) year terms. Two members appointed by the President of City Council shall serve three (3) year terms; two members appointed by the President of City Council shall serve two (2) year terms; and members appointed by the President shall serve one (1) year terms. Members may be reappointed for two (2) successive terms.

(d) **Public Notice.** All Commission member nominations shall be subject to public notice and public hearing laws pursuant to the Delaware Freedom of Information Act.

(e) **Leadership.** The Commission shall annually elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary from among its voting members.

(f) **Meetings.** The Commission shall meet no fewer than four (4) times annually, with additional meetings as needed. All Meetings shall be subject to applicable open meeting and public notice requirements.

(g) **Staff support.** The Department of Land Use and Planning shall appoint an employee to provide scheduling, coordination, and recordkeeping duties.

Section 2-149. Duties and Responsibilities; Reports.

(a) The Commission's duties and responsibilities shall include:

- i. Identifying and recommending African American historic sites, neighborhoods, landmarks, and cultural assets for recognition, protection, and preservation;
- ii. Advising on development, zoning, and planning matter impacting historically Black communities and culturally significant areas;
- iii. Supporting oral history projects, public art, memorials, archives, and cultural storytelling initiatives;
- iv. Promoting education, public engagement, and intergenerational knowledge-sharing related to African American history and culture; and
- v. Recommending funding priorities, grant opportunities, and partnerships to support preservation and cultural programming.

(b) **Rules.** The Commission shall promulgate its own bylaws, subject to administrative board approval required by section 4-200 of the Charter.

(c) **Reports.** The Commission shall submit an Annual Report to City Council and the Mayor outlining findings, recommendations, and progress.

SECTION 3. This Ordinance shall take effect upon passage by City Council and signing by the Mayor.

First Reading.....February 5, 2026
Second Reading.....February 5, 2026
Third Reading.....

Passed by City Council,

President of City Council

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

Approved as to form this 4th day
of February 2026

John D. Stat II

Assistant City Solicitor

Approved this ___ day of _____, 2026.

Mayor

SYNOPSIS: This Ordinance amends Chapter 2 of the City Code by deleting a defunct African American History Museum Foundation Committee and establishing in its place a permanent African American History and Cultural Preservation Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT: Because the support provided by the City government to the African American History and Cultural Preservation Committee will be mainly in-kind in nature, including the provision of meeting space and administrative support for scheduling, coordination, and recordkeeping by existing City staff, the associated fiscal impact is projected to be *de minimis*.