



# City of Cambridge

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February 10, 2026  
For Immediate Release

## **Cambridge's Civil Rights History Honored with Proclamation**

During the regular council meeting on Monday, Feb. 9, 2026, Mayor Lajan Cephas-Bey issued a proclamation “honoring Cambridge’s Civil Rights Legacy, recognizing Gloria Richardson and the Cambridge Movement, and affirming the city’s commitment to equal access, equal opportunity and human dignity.

The proclamation, which the mayor read into the record, mentions that the history of Cambridge is “woven into the fabric of MD250 and US250 history, reminding us that the American story is made real in local communities and measured by how fully its promises reach all people.”

Saying that “Cambridge’s Civil Rights history is inseparable from its Black history,” it points out that “Black History Month provides an appropriate moment to honor” all the way Cambridge’s people and places contributed to the struggle.

The document emphasizes that Cambridge “holds a nationally significant place in the Civil Rights Movement.” Among the many ways this is true, is the “Treaty of Cambridge” executed on July 23, 1963, by local and state Black leaders and local, state and federal political leaders, including United State Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

Mayor Cephas-Bey said the Treaty of Cambridge came after months of Civil Rights protests. In an effort to quell this unrest, the Commissioners of Cambridge, on July 1, 1963, passed Charter Amendment No. 15, which amended the charter by adding section 127A entitled Discrimination in Public Accommodations. This resolution made it unlawful for a place of public accommodation (owner, employees, agent) to refuse, withhold from or deny any

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of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges because of the race, creed, color or national origin of any person. It defined places of public accommodation as any hotel, restaurant, inn, motel or an establishment engaged in the business of providing sleeping accommodations, serving food, or both. It also said that places like bars, taverns, or cocktail lounges were not included. This resolution was set to go into effect on August 20, 1963.

On July 22, 1963, the document referred to as The Treaty of Cambridge was negotiated with the assistance of the United States Department of Justice and stated:

- The Human Relations Commission of the City of Cambridge was appointed, with four Black members
- Effective Aug. 1, 1963, a Black citizen was retained as an interviewer with the Department of Employment Security of the State of Maryland in the Cambridge Office
- The Charter Amendment (No. 15) was adopted, understanding that it could be subject to a referendum vote. It notes that parties involved in the negotiation believed it to be in the best interest of the town that it not go to a referendum vote.
- Desegregation of the first four grades in the Dorchester County School System was to be accomplished by September 1963, with applications for all other grades to be accepted without regard to race, creed or color.
- The Council had the Housing Authority file the necessary paperwork with the Federal Housing Administration to obtain a low-rent public housing project to materially benefit the Black community. Federal Housing Administrator Weaver assured the application would be expeditiously processed.

In recognition of the efforts and “to achieve continued cooperation” representatives of the Black citizens of the City of Cambridge agreed “there would be no form of protests or demonstrations for an indefinite period hereafter.”

This, however, was not the peaceful resolution it was drafted to be. Charter Amendment No. 15 was petitioned to referendum and did not pass. As public accommodation was a central concern in the Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, this unleashed a return of unrest, resulting in the National Guard remaining deployed in the city for approximately two years.

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Caption: From left: Commissioners Frank Stout, Brian Roche, Shay Lewis-Sisco and Brent Summers stand with Mayor Laja Cephas-Bey as she holds the proclamation honoring Cambridge's Civil Rights Legacy and Confirming the City's Commitment to Equal Access, Equal Opportunity and Human Dignity. The Council is standing before an image of the historic moment when Gloria Richardson, leader of the Cambridge Movement, was in discussions with the Attorney General of the United States Robert F. Kennedy and other local, state and federal stakeholders.

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