

Cambridge Advisory Committee on City Art, Monuments and Markers

Minutes

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

Attendees: Councillor Denise Simmons, Brian Corr, Charles Sullivan, Christine Hutchinson-Jones, Emmanuella Fedé, Eryn Johnson, Greggy Bazile, Janie Ward, Jason Weeks, Ora Grodsky, Sarah Burks, Suryani Dewa Ayu, Lisa Peterson, Melvin Downes, Neal Alpert, Tiya Miles, Valerie Beaudrault

Absent: Tim McCarthy

At 6 pm, Co-Chairs Councillor Simmons and Brian Corr welcomed attendees to the meeting and shared that the purpose of the meeting was designed to formally launch this committee and to introduce committee members to one another. They said the workflow for this meeting would adhere to the following:

- Establishing a shared understanding of our charge as a committee
- Establishing Committee “Ways of Being” and agreements about how we will do our work
- Providing an Opportunity for Committee members to get to know each other
- Providing a historical context of Cambridge monuments (15-20 minutes + questions)

Councillor Simmons and Brian Corr provided an overview of how and why the committee was formed, the bringing together of scholars, neighborhood activists, and young people to develop a recommended process for the City, and how inspiration for this committee was drawn from similar work being done in NYC under Mayor De Blasio.

Brian Corr provided an overview of the committee structure, sketching out the roles of the co-chairs, co-facilitators, the core support team, and the committee members coming together in a spirit of loving justice.

Co-Facilitator Ora Grodsky provided an overview of the POP (Purpose, Outcomes, Process) for today’s session:

- **Purpose:** why we’re doing this
- **Outcomes:** what we want to have, where we want to be at the end
- **Process:** how we will get there

Ora led the committee members through a round of introductions, and then Brian Corr dug deeper into the POP:

- **The Purpose:-why this committee exists:**
 - To develop recommendations to the City Manager and City Council on how the City should address City-owned monuments and markers



- **Desired Outcomes (where will we be and what will we have at the end):**
 - To develop procedures for review and assessment of those which may be viewed as inconsistent with the values of Cambridge, by which we mean a just City that prioritizes anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion
 - Develop a set of possible actions that could be employed to remediate problematic monuments, memorials and markers (e.g. removal, contextualization, etc.)
 - Make recommendations for how to determine which individuals or events might be newly recognized with a monument/public art, memorial or marker.
 - If capacity allows: consideration of 2 to 3 objects for possible action

- **The Process:**
 - How often we will meet, and the dates of meetings
 - Draft committee workflow: including breakdown of meeting days and schedule (6 meetings, 2 hours each)

Ora then reviewed the following proposed **Group Norms**:

- Share your voice. We come from our diverse experiences to create something together
- We don't have to agree, but we commit to listening deeply with an open mind
- Read materials between meetings--come to meetings prepared

Ora and Brian asked if anyone wished to propose additional Group Norms; none were suggested, but the door remains open to group members suggesting new ideas as they think of them.

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, then provided historical context for this work with a slide show entitled "Slavery and its Aftermath in Cambridge," giving a brief overview from the 1770s to 2019. Following the presentation, it was established that the Historical Commission has conducted a number of oral history projects, but we don't have interviews for all neighborhoods. There was a project that focused particularly on the Port, for example, but other neighborhoods like Riverside have yet to receive this focus.

Ora discussed next steps and what the group members should expect in advance of the next meeting, stating that material would be sent out to the members for their review. She closed out the meeting by soliciting feedback from each of the members, summarized below:

- **Emmanuella Fedé:** The presentation of the history showed me that there's so much I learned, and so much more I know I have to learn.
- **Tiya Miles:** I appreciated the very thoughtful facilitation and having two facilitators working together to guide us through the process, and the presentation.

- **Janie Ward:** I appreciate everything, think it was well put together, especially hearing from Charlie, he is just such a wealth in the city; I look forward to next presentation, I think this is going to be an interesting journey and I'm looking forward to it.
- **Eryn Johnson:** The presentation was absolutely a highlight, I've been able to see Charlie present before but this particular throughline was really special. I think the facilitation was great, I appreciated the moments of humanity, offering gratitude, and having us breathe - it's hard to feel humanity on zoom, and I hope we can maintain that sense of humanity without distracting us from the business.
- **Valerie Beaudrault :** I first really found Charlie's presentation fascinating and wish there had been enough time to see the whole thing.
- **Christine Hutchinson-Jones:** I appreciated the persistent focus not on just addressing problem monuments and place names but also the positive concept of increasing representation of unsung folks (including people who are truly unnamed in Harvard's history: the Goodies, waiters of Memorial Hall). I'm looking forward to getting to know one another, and like Eryn said, to maintain the human element.
- **Melvin Downes:** Charlie, you are a wealth of information, thank you. At this age that I'm at, I've been doing family history and learning a lot more. History is a wonderful thing, especially as you continue to mature, realize so many things, and learn about yourself. I'm grateful for this opportunity, very fortunate to be a Cantabrigian, and to continue to learn about my place in this wonderful city.
- **Greggy Bazile:** I enjoyed being able to imagine visually placing myself and grounding myself in these events while Charlie was talking.

Councillor Simmons and Brian offered closing words, advising members that the committee now had a public facing email (monuments@cambridgema.gov), they alluded to a brief overview of what's coming up in future meetings ("considering possible criteria for examining objects"), and the meeting adjourned at 8 pm.