



Cambridge Peace Commission

A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Minutes of the Peace Commission Meeting • October 20, 2021

Commission Members Present: Co-Chair Elka Kuhlman, Co-Chair Larry Kim, Kaza Fraley, David Seeman

City Staff Present: Executive Director Brian Corr, CPD Deputy Superintendent Fred Cabral

Call to Order: Co-Chair Kuhlman called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

Executive Director's Report

- Exec. Director Corr reported that due to the ongoing pandemic, Meet Your Neighbor Day was much smaller than in the past, but that it was good that there were events, including ones organized by members of the Peace Commission
- He also noted that for the same reason, it is not clear what form a Martin Luther King Day commemoration might take in January 2022.

Recruiting and Onboarding New Members

- Commission members discussed the role and function of members of the Peace Commission, and how new members can be brought onto the Commission in a way that their role is clear and that they understand the work of the Commission – both the work of its staff, and of members of the Commission
- ED Corr reported that he has talked to the City Manager's Office about moving forward with recruiting new members, and that a posting on the City's website and a press release will be issued announcing that the Peace Commission will be seeking additional members, and that will be posted before the next Commission meeting.
- Commission members Seeman, Fraley, and Kuhlman volunteered to participate in interview of applicants to the Commission.
- There was general agreement that it would be good to have a retreat

Planning for Future Events

- Commission members discussed the work done for an event around the video "RACE: The Power of an Illusion," which was postponed as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, and whether doing a virtual event would accomplish what the Commission originally hoped. Commission members agreed that because of "Zoom fatigue" and related issues, it would be better to identify different types of ways to reach the community.
- A general way of looking at activities and events in this period would be to think of the idea of "shalom" in its deeper sense: that in the original Hebrew the word *shalom* is not simply "peace", but that it is the presence of goodness, wellbeing, wholeness and health – and that looking at shalom as a way to support Cambridge being a better and more harmonious place, recognizing that there are typically issues of race and justice embedded in that work.
- Commission members discussed the possibility of a relatively short event or events, perhaps lasting 30 minutes, that could support people in living with and through the effects of the

pandemic. One potential speaker identified was Karestan Koenen from the Harvard School of Public Health, who has done numerous online presentations and forums for helping people manage the mental health and traumatic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Commission members also discussed ways to promote positive messages and examples through the monthly meetings of the Commission, such as possibly celebrating and recognizing everyday community peacemakers, celebrating residents who did something well and perhaps unnoticed, as well as bringing out the beauty in our city in the everyday people who live and work here – who thrive here and help the world to thrive.
- Commission members also discussed how to take the idea of Meet Your Neighbor Day and create smaller or less formal ways to connect, and discussed ideas including: doing Meet your neighbor “moments” that would be something small to connect to a neighbor; finding a way to have a “Meet Your *Actual* Neighbor Day”; something like Parking Day or a community-wide yard/tag sale or giveaway to encourage people to get together; something that invites neighbors to meet through something like “Porch Fest” which many communities do; connecting with other events that take place in Cambridge such as the Bow-Tie Rides organized by the City’s Bicycle Committee and Port Pride Day; and simply encouraging people to do small acts of kindness like sharing meals with or baking bread for neighbors.
-

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 PM on a motion from Commission Member Seeman, seconded by Commission Member Fraley, approved by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the Peace Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, November 17, 2021 via Zoom.