



## Meeting Minutes

### Monthly Commission Meeting via Zoom Tuesday, May 28, 2024, at 6:00 P.M.

**Present:** Chair Maximus De Medici, Commissioners Karin Lin, Vanessa Ruget, Vanessa Sarmiento, Felipe Lobo Koerich, Shubhan Nagendra, Tsamchoe Dolma

CIRC Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto, and Director of Operations Sarah Binney

Guest Presenter: Phoebe West, Office of the Housing Liaison Project Coordinator

Other City Staff: Catiana Jean Pierre, Outreach Worker with the Community Development Department Community Engagement Team

**Absent:** Chair Abhishek Raman, Commissioners Debbie Klein, Karim Razzaz, Ana Mejia,

#### 1. Call to order

- ED Almonte called the meeting to order at 6:07pm

#### 2. Public comment

- Catiana Jean-Pierre joined the meeting to learn more about the Cambridge Welcomes Event.

#### 3. Review and approval of March 2024 minutes

- Commissioner Lobo Koerich moved to approve the March 2024 minutes; Commissioner Ruget seconded.

#### 4. Presentation by Phoebe West, Project Coordinator, Office of the Housing Liaison (OHL)

- PC West shared an update about the Registry of Deeds shelter and how new arrivals are being welcomed in Cambridge. West shared that Massachusetts is a right to shelter state, so all who are eligible automatically qualify for shelter. Historically, those eligible would be placed in shelter the day they applied. When traditional shelters were filled, motel sites were added and staffed by the National Guard. In Fall of 2023, the shelters reached capacity and an emergency shelter waitlist was implemented. The state added sites called Safety Net Sites as shelters for families on the waiting list to stay. The Registry of Deeds building in Cambridge became a Safety Net Site in December 2023. The shelter has around 200 people including both children and adults. The majority of families speak Haitian Creole with Spanish as the second most common native language. Most families came directly from the airport. Families have case workers through the state that support them in finding and accessing work. Cambridge city staff have supported shelter residents in school enrollment, vaccine clinics, accessing primary care, and connecting families with summer camp programming. The shelter is not a 24-hour shelter, so families have to find other places to be during the day. There will be a new state contract starting in the summer that will have one agency responsible for night shelter management, day spaces, and case work. There is a shower trailer next to the

building. Commissioner Nagendra asked about how data is collected about the residents. PM West shared that data collection is really challenging. Most of the data comes from school enrollment. Most data are kept confidential for the privacy of the residents. Commissioner Ruget asked where families go when they leave. PM West explained that some are being transferred between sites as needs change, some are getting off of the waitlist and moving into traditional shelters, and some are finding other housing arrangements. A major challenge is families being moved really far throughout the state which makes employment and education stability very challenging. Commissioner Lin explained an initiative to house families staying in the airport in homestays and asked if the city was involved in these initiatives. PM West shared that there are both logistical and liability issues with city involvement in homestay programs. Commissioner Sarmiento asked about the referral process for shelter applications. PM West discussed case management connection process. The city of Cambridge supplements state resources. If an organization is interested in supporting with service provision to Registry of Deeds families, they can reach out to OHL. If families need support accessing shelter, they can visit the OHL. The OHL is located at the Multi Service Center at 362 Green St.

#### **5. Staff Reports**

- Cambridge Citizenship Day
  - Cambridge Citizenship Day took place on May 21, 2024 at the Sanofi building in East Cambridge. 44 individuals were supported in applying for Citizenship, which is a large increase from last year's event. Mayor Simmons attended the event to welcome participants. CIRC staff shared information about the Commission and information about local resources.
- Welcome Event
  - DOO Binney updated Commissioners about the status of the "Cambridge Welcomes" event on May 31, 2024, from 5:00pm-8:00pm. This event will take place on the front lawn of the Main Library, or in the CRLS cafeteria in case of rain. There will be food, musicians, dance performances, activities for kids including face painting, and a community resource fair. CIRC will have a resource table. Commissioners volunteered to help with setup, cleanup, food serving, and tabling.

#### **6. New Business**

- Commissioner Ruget motioned to pause monthly CIRC meetings in the months of July and August. Commissioner Lin seconded.

#### **7. Adjournment**

- Commissioner Sarmiento moved for the meeting to adjourn. Commissioner Ruget seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:08pm.