



CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ AGENDA ~

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

5:30 PM

Remote Meeting

The Charter Review Committee

A communication was received from Anna Corning, Project Manager, transmitting the Charter Review Agenda.



City of Cambridge

COF 2023 #243
IN CITY COUNCIL
December 19, 2023

A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

December 19, 2023, @ 5:30 p.m.
 REMOTE ONLY – VIA ZOOM

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation at meetings of the Cambridge Charter Review Committee.

The zoom link is: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/83253118929>

Meeting ID: 832 5311 8929

One tap mobile +13092053325,,83253118929# US

Agenda Items – Tuesday, December 19, 2023

- I. Roll Call 5:30 PM
- II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born
- I. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from the meeting of December 5, 2023
- III. Meeting Materials Submitted to the Committee to be placed on file
 - Communications from Committee Members
 - Communications from Council Members
 - Communications from the Public
 - i.* A communication was received from Jesse Baer, regarding support for a strong mayor form of government, resident assembly and elected police advisory board
 - ii.* A communication was received from Owen Elrifi, regarding support for a strong mayor form of government
 - iii.* A communication was received from Derek Etkin, regarding support for a strong mayor form of government, resident assembly and elected police advisory board
 - iv.* A communication was received from Ye Tan, regarding support for city manager form of government
 - v.* A communication was received from Maritza Soto, regarding support for a strong mayor form of government
 - vi.* A communication was received from Molly Howard, regarding support for city manager form of government
 - vii.* A communication was received from Chunmin Chen, regarding support for city manager form of government
 - viii.* A communication was received from David Weinstein, regarding support for city manager form of government and length of term for school committee members

- ix. A communication was received from Crandall Peeler, regarding support for city manager form of government
- x. A communication was received from Jin, regarding support for city manager form of government
- xi. A communication was received from **George R. Metzger**, regarding regarding support for city manager form of government
- xii. A communication was received from Sarah Roszler, regarding regarding support for city manager form of government
- xiii. A communication was received from Sara Kimmel, regarding support for city manager form of government
- xiv. A communication was received from Mike Goodman, regarding support for a strong mayor form of government, resident assembly and elected police advisory board
- xv. A communication was received from Patricia Wagner, regarding support for city manager form of government
- xvi. A communication was received from Charles Mitchell, regarding support for a strong mayor form of government
- xvii. A communication was received from Sejal Aggarwal, regarding support for city manager form of government
- xviii. A communication was received from Anna Shin & David Tempel, regarding support for city manager form of government
- xix. A communication was received from Yueling Moran, regarding support for city manager form of government
- xx. A communication was received from Adriane Musgrave, regarding support for city manager form of government
- xxi. A communication was received from Akunna Eneh, regarding support for a strong mayor form of government, resident assembly and elected police advisory board
- xxii. A communication was received from Robin Chen, regarding balance of power
- xxiii. A communication was received from Jameson Quinn , regarding election decision and charter text language
- xxiv. A communication was received from Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler, regarding support for strong mayor form of government
- xxv. A communication was received from Jamie Wong, regarding term limits
- Other Meeting Materials

IV. Public Comment

- Members of the public are invited to share their ideas or comments with the committee.

V. Decision Points: See attached document for committee decision points

- **Facilitator:** Anna, Pat, Mike. **Goal:** Review decision points, deliberation and votes
 - i. 12/5 Decision Points + Deliberation Information

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, DEEMBER 5, 2023**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kathleen Born, Chair
Kaleb Abebe
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo
Mosammat Faria Afreen
Nikolas Bowie
Kevin Chen
Max Clermont
Jennifer Gilbert
Kai Long
Patrick Magee
Mina Makarios
Lisa Peterson
Ellen Shachter
Susan Shell
Jim Stockard

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, December 5, 2023. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30p.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Present
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Present
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Present
Nikolas Bowie – Absent*
Kevin Chen – Present
Max Clermont – Present
Jennifer Gilbert – Present
Kai Long – Present
Patrick Magee – Present
Mina Makarios – Absent*
Lisa Peterson – Absent*
Ellen Shachter – Present
Susan Shell – Absent*
Jim Stockard – Present
Kathleen Born – Present

Present – 11, Absent – 4. Quorum established.

*Member Nikolas Bowie was marked present at 5:35p.m.
*Member Mina Makarios was marked present at 5:38p.m.
*Member Lisa Peterson was marked present at 5:40p.m.

*Member Susan Shell was marked present at 6:30p.m.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Jim Stockard who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from November 14, 2023 and November 21, 2023.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

- Kaleb Abebe – Yes
- Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes
- Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
- Nikolas Bowie – Yes
- Kevin Chen – Yes
- Max Clermont – Yes
- Jennifer Gilbert – Yes
- Kai Long – Yes
- Patrick Magee – Yes
- Mina Makarios – Absent
- Lisa Peterson – Absent
- Ellen Shachter – Yes
- Susan Shell – Absent
- Jim Stockard – Yes
- Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Mosammat Faria Afreen who made a motion to adopt communications received from Committee members, City Councillors, and the public.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

- Kaleb Abebe – Yes
- Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes
- Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
- Nikolas Bowie – Yes
- Kevin Chen – Yes
- Max Clermont – Yes
- Jennifer Gilbert – Yes
- Kai Long – Yes
- Patrick Magee – Yes
- Mina Makarios – Yes
- Lisa Peterson – Yes
- Ellen Shachter – Yes
- Susan Shell – Absent
- Jim Stockard – Yes
- Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 14, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born opened Public Comment.

Councillor Simmons thanked the Committee for all their work and offered comments relative to her experience as a City Councillor. Councillor Simmons shared that she was in favor of a City Manager form of government and noted that the form of government that the City currently has continues to effectively serve the community.

Adriane Musgrave offered comments that were in favor of the current system of form of government.

Matt LeMay offered comments that were strongly opposed to a strong Mayor form of government.

Eugenia Schra offered comments that were in support of the current form of government system.

Susan Fleischmann spoke in opposition to changing the Charter to a strong Mayor.

Rachel Liao spoke in opposition to changing the current form of government.

Lynn Lee shared they were in favor of the current system versus a strong Mayor system.

Liz Speakman, City of Cambridge employee, strongly supports a City Manager form of government.

Joyce Majewski spoke in favor of keeping a City Manager form of government.

Caroline Zheng spoke in strong support of the current form of government.

Jesse Baer offered comments on form of government, democracy, and elections.

Chris Cassa shared that having a City Manager has provided stable leadership.

Jane Donohue spoke in favor of a City Manager form of government.

Dan Totten spoke in favor of a strong Mayor form of government and shared concerns with the current form of government.

Payal shared their support for a strong Mayor form of government.

Phil Rinehart spoke in favor of the current form of government system.

Jacqui Fahey Sandell spoke in strong opposition to a strong Mayor form of government.

Robert Winters shared that they are strongly opposed to a strong Mayor form of government.

Kit Kanesh shared they were in support of a strong Mayor form of government.

Stephen C. offered comments and suggestions on forms of government.

Hayden B. noted the importance of accountability, inclusion, equity, and proportional representation.

Anna Corning, Charter Review Project Manager thanked everyone who participated in Public Comment. Anna Corning recognized Committee members for comments.

Member Kai Long shared that it is hard to make change, but to create change you have to take the first steps, which is not always easy.

Member Jennifer Gilbert shared that she would be in favor of putting the choice of form of government to the voters.

Member Susan Shell reminded Committee members and the public that their recommendation on form of government does become a public vote, and there are many more steps that need to be taken before it gets to the voters of Cambridge.

Member Mina Makarious shared that the Committee has worked very hard discussing both sides of form of government and noted that cities with strong Mayors are not necessarily doing better with similar issues that Cambridge is facing, such as affordable housing.

Member Ellen Shachter shared that there have been strong arguments from both sides, although she does support a strong Mayor, she recognizes that there could be challenges that come with the change.

Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo shared that they have reviewed all the information that has been provided but is in favor of a strong Mayor. Member Acevedo noted the importance of creating progressive and innovative motions going forward and that the City currently lacks diversity and accessibility.

Member Mosammat Faria Afreen responded to comments made by Councillor Simmons and shared that what the Committee is discussing is having a Mayor who is directly accountable to the Councillors and the voters. Member Afreen also shared that she would be in favor of having a democratically elected Police Review Advisory Board (PRAB) and would like the Committee to take a vote on it.

Member Nikolas Bowie offered comments relative to the budget and having a CAFO with a strong Mayor, noting how it will reflect the priorities of those who vote. Member Bowie offered comments that were in support of a strong Mayor.

Anna Corning noted that due to the time, and some members needing to leave the meeting early, the Committee should vote on the Mayor-CAFO-Council form of government.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Kaleb Abebe who made a motion that the Committee recommend a Mayor-CAFO-Council form of government for the Plan E Charter.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – No

Max Clermont – No
 Jennifer Gilbert – Yes
 Kai Long – Yes
 Patrick Magee – No
 Mina Makarious – No
 Lisa Peterson – No
 Ellen Shachter – Yes
 Susan Shell – Yes
 Jim Stockard – No
 Kathleen Born – No
Yes – 8, No – 7. Motion failed.

Anna Corning shared that members Long and Afreen would be creating a statement relative to a strong Mayor form of government to include in the proposed language for the Charter and asked if any other Committee members would be available to help. Anna Corning noted that the statement is to provide a reflection of the discussions around a strong Mayor.

Member Jennifer Gilbert asked for more information related to PRAB and why the Committee would potentially be voting on it. Anna Corning shared that although this is not a topic that has been discussed by the Committee, members of the public have submitted communications on that topic.

Member Jessica DeJesus had clarifying questions for the final report and future discussions. Anna Corning was available to respond and review the outline of the final report. Chair Born reviewed what the next steps are for the final meeting on December 19, 2023 and that the final report will be the record that reflects the votes and actions that were taken by the Committee. Chair Born noted that there needs to be a 2/3 majority vote to support the final report to forward to the City Council and shared what would happen if there was not a 2/3 majority vote. Chair Born stressed to Committee members that the 2/3 vote for the final report is not a vote for or against the issue of form of government, but to approve the report that offers detailed information and recommendations relative to the many discussions that have taken place over the last year and half. Chair Born shared the importance of having a 2/3 vote in order to submit the final report and the Committees recommendations to the City Council for their review, noting that both statements relative to Strong Mayor and Strong Manager will be included.

Member Ellen Shachter shared that they feel the end of the Committee meetings and the final report feels very rushed, and shared concerns about the report. Anna Corning shared that she is open to having members assist with the writing of the final report and include information they believe is important for the City Council to review.

Member Mosammat Faria Afreen shared again that they would like the Committee to vote on a democratically elected PRAB.

Member Mina Makarious agreed with comments by member Shachter regarding feeling rushed and asked what it would look like for the Committee to potentially ask the City Council for an additional extension. Chair Born and Anna Corning provided comments relative to extending.

Elliott Veloso, First Assistant City Solicitor, advised that due to PRAB not being on the Committee's Agenda, he would express caution with the Committee voting on it because it would violate the Open Meeting Law. Additionally, Elliott Veloso provided a response to the Committee potentially asking for an extension and the process on how to extend.

Committee members were recognized for comments and concerns on the possibility of extending the Committee as well as voting on PRAB. Member Afreen asked if the PRAB topic could be added on to the Agenda for the next meeting.

Anna Corning asked Committee members to take a straw poll to see if they would like to add PRAB to next week's decision point list. Four members were in favor of adding it, five members were not in favor, five members voted as present, and one member was absent.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Kaleb Abebe who made a motion to request to the City Council an extension to the end of January 2024 with no additional topics to consider but to finalize and edit the committee's final report.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Present

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Present

Nikolas Bowie – Absent

Kevin Chen – Yes

Max Clermont – Yes

Jennifer Gilbert – Yes

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarious – Yes

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 12, No – 0, Present – 2, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The Charter Review Committee adjourned at approximately 8:00p.m.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/633?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=8a7c6de54e41f85f71746c8c5609b290

Another voice for a strong mayor

Jesse Baer <nowhereplains@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 12:19 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Committee Members,

I support a strong mayor system, so I was elated to hear that the balance of opinion among you has shifted in that direction. Others weren't so glad. It's readily apparent that supporters of the Plan E charter have mounted a last minute all-out campaign to defend it. I imagine this puts you under a lot of pressure, but I hope you will stand firm.

As it happens, those now advocating to preserve the status quo are inadvertently making a strong case for change. Their arguments tend to focus on outcomes. Cambridge is on a good track, they say, and would be doing worse if we didn't have a city manager, insulated from electoral politics.

Now, I don't actually agree that things are going well. But let's assume you do. The rest of the argument probably sounds straightforward and common sensical enough. But that is precisely why it is so corrosive.

In a democracy, elections are not a nuisance or a distraction. They are fundamental to the very substance of governance. Democratic politics doesn't always feel good, look good, or even lead to the best outcome. It's messy, it's ugly, it's divisive and inefficient.

Given all this, it can be easy to wonder, why do we do this to ourselves? Isn't all this fighting and politicking exhausting? Wouldn't it be easier to just hand it over to someone who could disregard the ever shifting political winds, cut through all the mess, and just make things work?

That's the promise of the strongman. It's a message that may well get Donald Trump re-elected next year. And it's also the argument being made by defenders of Plan E, as much as they'd hate the comparison. Especially given the racist history of arguments for this form of government, the comparison is, and frankly should be, inescapable.

My formative political experience was as a CRLS student, trying to get the City Council to lower the municipal voting age so that high schoolers could vote. It was formative because it taught me about the power of organizing, but also how much the system was rigged against change. Because even though we got the City Council to move from rejecting our proposal 6-3, to approving a modified version by 8-1 the following year, it was a home rule petition, and it proceeded to die at the State House without even the dignity of a hearing.

I went off to college and it took me about two decades to get involved in local politics again. And now, having done so, I've quickly been reminded of how comprehensively the system is rigged against change and structured to discourage democratic participation. Volunteering for a candidate in this last cycle, I was repeatedly confronted with the challenge of motivating people to care. Why bother participating when the real power is vested in someone beyond the reach of democratic accountability?

It's a good question, and one I found myself asking just earlier today. This is the second letter I'm writing today. In the first one, I asked the City Council to insist that Manager Huang engage in good faith to finalize a contract with Cambridge HEART. His willingness to disregard the Council's earlier resolution calling on him to do so, and his choice to skip a recently scheduled Council hearing, drives home to me that there are fundamental problems with this position transcending the personal qualities of anyone who might hold it. Mr. Huang may well be just about the best person

we could hope to serve in his current role, and I sincerely hope he will stay in city government regardless of what happens. He's certainly a far cry from his predecessor, who seemed to take pleasure in flouting the will of the people he served. And yet, in the end, he still privileges his own preferences and biases over the popular will, because *that is the essential nature of his job*.

I mentioned above that I don't actually accept the premise that things are going well in this city. I was born here almost 40 years ago. In that time, I've watched the vibrant diverse city I love be slowly drained of everything that made it vital and unique. I don't think it's too late to save this city, but I think it begins by reviving our democracy, and re-engaging the populace in the work of self-governance. We don't have the power to reform the home rule process, but we can give the voters of Cambridge real power in line with their peers in neighboring towns.

That is a minimum, but we should go further still. I love the idea of Resident Assemblies vested with actual power, and as my personal history might suggest, I am thrilled that it would include 16 and 17 year olds. And as my support of HEART suggests, I think real police accountability is vital to make Cambridge a place of equal safety and justice for all its people, so I would strongly urge you to put forward an independent and empowered Police Review Accountability Board.

I love this city. I don't want it to wither into a soulless enclave for rich people and upscale chain stores. But reinvigorating it starts with rejecting the narcotic logic of disenfranchisement. We can't determine what happens nationally next year, but we can model the direction we'd like things to go. I hope you'll choose democracy.

Sincerely,
Jesse Baer

SUPPORT FOR STRONG MAYOR, ELECTED PRAB, RA WITHOUT CC CENSORSHIP

Owen Elrifi <owenelrifi@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 12:21 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Good afternoon,

I am writing to express my strong support for the strong mayor system over the city manager model.

I also support an elected PRAB and a Residents Assembly that can have their recommendations directly voted on, without passing through the council (assuming of course a supermajority vote).

Thank you.

Attachment: 12_19 CRC Agenda + Meeting Materials (COF 2023 #243 : A communication was received from Anna Corning, Project Manager,)

Please support "Strong Mayor", Resident Assembly, and PRAB

Derek Etkin <dereketkin@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 12:22 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee Members,

My name is Derek Etkin and I live on 109 Clay Street with my spouse and our two CPSD students. I am writing in support of a Mayor-Council form of government with a democratically elected executive (mayor). The current Plan E charter is one of the oldest municipal charters in the Commonwealth and is not equipped to respond democratically to the increasing challenges we face over housing, education, infrastructure, and police accountability.

Unless I'm mistaken the city council hasn't rejected a city manager contract since Bob Healy got the job in 1981. The unelected City Manager position is strengthened by elected city councilors who are put in a position of supporting him/her or "getting on their bad side", and having their initiatives ignored. The system gives preference to the status quo and to citizens with the time and connections to build a relationship with the unelected executive ignoring the rest of us who are under the impression that our voice is heard during the election.

Civic engagement at the municipal level in Cambridge is lower than it must be to build the city we need for everyone. I urge the committee to follow through on creating a Resident Assembly that is supported by City Hall with stipends and resources, and with the power to put decisions to the voters.

Cambridge needs to have a police review advisory board who can independently investigate claims of police misconduct and order disciplinary action including and up to termination of employment of police department employees. This PRAB itself should be accountable and democratically-elected and not appointed by the city manager. Please recommend that the new charter includes the PRAB elected by voters.

Derek Etkin
109 Clay Street Cambridge

Against the strong mayor proposal in Cambridge

Ye Tan <drtanye@hotmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 12:47 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>; City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I support keeping the current City Manager form of government. A strong mayor system would mean the City's main executive would no longer be chosen for their managerial talent by a majority of our democratically-elected Council.

The benefit of the current system is evidenced by our current City Manager. Mr. Huang has made progress on issues that matter to residents, and is best-placed to continue that momentum. Currently, Cambridge city is very well run. Change to strong mayor system may do more damage than benefit the city as a whole.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Ye Tan
35 Magnolia Ave.
Cambridge

Sent from my iPhone

Attachment: 12_19 CRC Agenda + Meeting Materials (COF 2023 #243 : A communication was received from Anna Corning, Project Manager,)

Strong Mayor > City Manager

Maritza Soto <maritzasoto@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 1:17 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I'm writing to urge you to recommend a mayor-council form of government in your final report.

The chief executive of our city should be elected by the people. Cambridge is one of only two remaining MA cities with a Plan E Charter (the other is Lowell). Cambridge has had this charter since it was adopted in 1940. It's been long overdue to dispense with Plan E. Here are some examples of cities that already have: Medford operated under Plan E until 1988, Gloucester operated under Plan E until adoption of a home rule charter in 1974, and Revere adopted Plan B in 1965 after operating under Plan E.

Please consider the anti-civil rights history behind the City Manager form of government presented by Kevin Hsu in his public comment. I was surprised to learn that multiple cities' transitions from mayor to city manager forms of government were supported by the KKK. But it makes sense that racist groups would want a system that takes voting power away from Black and other marginalized citizens.

I've noticed many commenters who favor a manager-council system saying that the committee should take more time to study the issue and that we shouldn't make such a big change without having a more inclusive process. But they must be simply unaware that this committee was created exactly for that purpose through a long and painstaking process. You've all spent countless volunteer hours already and created numerous opportunities for public feedback - if people are frustrated they're only hearing about it now, I don't think that's a reason to scrap all your work and start from scratch!

I'm frustrated that the city manager hasn't acted on funding HEART despite a clear order from the council, which is supposed to be the people's representative body. The other day, he skipped a hearing on the issue. I'm sure he had a good reason, but it's been two years now and he hasn't acted. The same thing happened with municipal broadband under our last manager. And there's nothing I can do to hold him accountable. I don't think an elected mayor would be able to hide from people's disapproval in the same way.

None of the pro-mayor supporters have criticized this particular city manager. They have all had thoughtful systematic critiques of the city manager position itself. If the people of Cambridge like this city manager then I'm happy to tell you the Chief Administrator and Financial officer (CA/FO) positions will be hiring in 2026. And our current city manager could apply.

Legally, the City Council is not allowed to tell any city employees what to do. All requests have to go through the City Manager. Because the City Manager controls the staff and resources, the City Council can't do much at all in terms of the operations of the city. Even for simple requests like fixing potholes. The City Council has to contact the City Manager to beg to get the problem fixed.

[Violations of s. 107 of MGL, c. 43](#): The Council may not interfere with manager's duties and responsibilities in matters of appointments and removals and may not give orders to any subordinate of the city manager... **punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both. Also subject to removal from office and loss of eligibility to "ever again" seek any elective city office.**

Legally, the city manager can say no to the policy orders. They can just ignore them (aka the "pocket veto"). Sure, sometimes, a policy order can evolve into an ordinance, which is law. (After the city manager failed to adequately respond to policy orders around bike lanes, the city council eventually passed an ordinance). However, City Councilors are often squeamish about actually

passing an ordinance, so they'll pass a policy order instead. Passing an ordinance is a multi-month process taking multiple city council meetings. If for every ask the city has to make it an ordinance, does it really sound like the city manager works for the city council?

What's stopping the City Manager (supposedly an apolitical position) after leaving office to work to lobby for the special interests that they were tasked to reign in as the executive with control of nearly a BILLION dollar budget? The city manager seems like the radical option to me! The compromise position is the creation of the Chief Administrator & Financial officer positions under the mayor so that the city benefits from professional skills of these two positions while the mayor directs the vision for the city.

The pro-Manager side seems to hold on to this notion that collaborative goal setting is not possible without a city manager. Why not add into the charter that the mayor and/or their staff is required to attend every city council meeting? If the mayor understands what the council's decision making process is, tensions are less likely to flare up. The council should provide the mayor a quarterly performance review, and the end-of-year performance review of the mayor should be made public to the voters. I am looking forward to a mayor who takes this city into the next phase of growth by 2026.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Maritza Soto
82 Fresh Pond Parkway

Supportive of keeping the current City Manager form of Government

Molly Howard <molly.e.howard@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 1:20 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; schraa@gmail.com <schraa@gmail.com>; Amanda Beatty <amanda.beatty@gmail.com>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I very strongly support keeping the current City Manager form of government. A strong mayor system would mean the City's main executive would no longer be chosen for their managerial talent by a majority of our democratically-elected Council.

The benefit of the current system is evidenced by our current City Manager. Mr. Huang has made progress on issues that matter to residents (for example: bringing increased transparency to the City Manager's progress against their goals).

Thank you,

Molly Howard

15 Clinton St, Cambridge, MA 02139

To support keeping the current City Manager system

Cecilia Chen <cchen42@yahoo.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 1:26 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the current city manager system. As a homeowner in Cambridge for more than 12 years the current system is both professional and democratic and has worked very well for our city. Cambridge has continued to thrive and improve in many ways under past and current city managers and it makes me proud to call this city my home.

Thank you!

Chunmin Chen

287 Harvard Street #36 Cambridge 02139

Comments on charter review recommendations

David Weinstein <dweinstein@cpsd.us>

Tue 12/5/2023 1:28 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee Members,

Thank you for your service on behalf of the people of Cambridge. You've grappled with important questions pertaining to our form of government with seriousness and focus.

I am writing to suggest you consider the following:

Maintain the strong city manager form of government, with a mayor selected by the Council from among its members. This form of government provides effective democratic representation by ensuring that the council has oversight of the city manager, reflecting the will of the voters more fully because of our proportional representation elections. The city manager can then use their expertise to effectively implement the will of the Council. In my experience the mayor as Chair of the School Committee has also been able to effectively serve as a bridge between the City Council and the School Committee, in part because they are a member of both bodies. This has helped the City better support children by working in a coordinated, collaborative fashion.

Consider extending the length of terms in office. Writing as a School Committee member recently elected to a third term, I know first hand how much time and focus is taken up by the campaign season. It is important for voters to meet candidates through forums, other events, and one-on-one campaigning, and that is very time consuming. Two year terms leave a too-short window of time for newly elected members to get up to speed, and for new committees typically composed of both new and returning members to establish relationships, form subcommittees and engage in the work, before needing to plunge back into campaigning.

Thank you for your consideration. Please reach out to me if I can be helpful.

Best wishes,

David Weinstein

Cambridge School Committee Member

dweinstein@cpsd.us

I support keeping the current city manager system

Crandall Peeler <crandall.peeler@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 1:37 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I support keeping the current City Manager form of government. A strong mayor system would mean the City's main executive would no longer be chosen for their managerial talent by a majority of our democratically-elected Council.

The benefit of the current system is evidenced by our current City Manager. Mr. Huang has made progress on issues that matter to residents (for example: expanding afterschool), and is best-placed to continue that momentum.

Thank you,

Crandall Peeler

23 Bay St. Cambridge, MA 02139

Support City manager model

jinhucui@hotmail.com <jinhucui@hotmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 1:43 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>

Good afternoon all,

After I did some research about strong manager model vs. major model, I believe the strong city manager may be better trained and more efficient.
I support the current city manager.

Sincerely,
Jin

Sent from my iPhone

December 5, 2003

Dear members of the Charter Review Committee,

As a resident of Mid Cambridge and a local businessperson who has worked with the city in many capacities of the past 5 decades, I have serious concerns regarding what I understand to be this Committee's proposal to recommend a change to a strong mayor form of government.

I have not been following the committee's work closely, which I also understand has been difficult to do for members of the public. I endorse any effort to review the effectiveness of our local government from time to time. That is what we do in our biennial election of Councilors. That is what we do when the Council selects a new City Manager. In my opinion, our local governance is very democratic, principally because of PR voting and at-large representation on the council.

From my experience working with many municipalities in Massachusetts, our current form of government works relatively well. There is robust debate on most every significant issue, not unlike a town meeting. There is easy access to Councilors to discuss one's concerns and opinions on pending issues. And while there is consideration and debate and often reconsideration from time to time on a wide range of civic issues, there is a City Manager whose role is to execute the Councilors' collective vision and provide the day-to-day operations that we need to have our city run smoothly and meet our needs as residents.

An elected strong mayor form of government would accomplish no improvement over the current situation. And yes, there are improvements to be made as always. But to my mind the two areas of critical importance in good government are:

A Council that establishes a responsible vision for the city, sets expectations for the city management to accomplish that vision, and evaluates the city manager's performance and success with appropriate frequency. We need to provide our elected councilors with more training and support so that they can perform their duties at the highest level.

A City Manager who works well with the Council, selects and supports highly competent departmental operations, sets exemplary standards of service to the citizens and taxpayers, and holds departmental managers accountable for responsible and effective operations at all levels.

By changing our form to a strong mayor, elected at-large every two or four years, diminishes the role of the elected councilors and subjects government operation to a biennial or quadrennial political process that will interfere with long term management operations. Most concerning to me, an elected strong mayor will inevitably use the resources and administration of the mayor's office to favorably influence re-election. Lastly, the probability that we would be governed by a mayor, popularly elected by the slimmest of margins and perhaps without demonstrated excellence in organizational leadership, is in fact not very democratic and threatens what we have come to accept as a highly successful municipal operation, as complicated as many of the large corporations and institutions at home in our city.

Respectfully,

Geroge Metzger
90 Antrim Street, Cambridge, 02139
617.448.5831

Letter in support of current City Manager system

Sarah Roszler <sroszler@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 2:16 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>

Dear Charter Review Committee and City Council,

As a recently-minted US citizen, I feel privileged that my new status as a Cambridge voter gives me a voice, however small, in the running of our city. I'm writing this letter to apply my voice to the defense of our current model of administration: a partnership between the City Manager and the City Council. I don't see that we would be better-served with a Strong Mayor model.

I became a US Citizen in large part because I love living in Cambridge. We get so much here: amazing services, dedicated civil servants, low tax rates, good schools, and of course, unparalleled investment in our public buildings, parks, and infrastructure. **It seems to me that the "City Manager / City Council" form of government is at the heart of what we value in Cambridge for the following reasons:**

- **The City Manager takes the long view of what's best for Cambridge.** In the alternate Strong Mayor model, our leadership would be distracted from their core job of leading the city every election cycle.
- **The City Manager is a non-political position.** The City Manager is answerable to the Council - and thereby to the whole electorate - whereas a Strong Mayor is only answerable to their small constituency of voters.
- **The City Manager position attracts candidates who are seasoned administrators** (like Yi-An Huang). Cambridge is a world-renowned center with a diverse population and billion-dollar budget, and the job of running the city is complex. We need an administrator with deep experience and skill. These important qualifications are not at all guaranteed by an electoral process, but they can be sought by the Council during the hiring process, and evaluated over time.
- **The shared leadership of the City Manager / City Council is efficient.** In this model, the City Councilors establish a strategic vision for the city, while the City Manager and professional staff work out the administrative and operational details. Everyone is bringing their respective skills to the table.
- **The shared leadership of the City Manager / City Council is a system of checks and balances, particularly with respect to the budget.** The City Manager ideally acts as a mediator between the political imperative to spend money in the short term, and the administrative imperative to keep our finances healthy and credit rating secure over the long term.
- **A Strong Mayor would necessarily be the result of a minority vote.** Of the 100,000 people in Cambridge, only about 60,000 are eligible voters, and of those, only 20,000 historically vote, meaning that a Strong Mayor would represent, at best, only a narrow 20% of our community. And because incumbency is a powerful determinant in local elections, a Strong Mayor's small group of supporters could be making decisions on our behalf over the course of several election cycles - or decades.

I commend the Council for pursuing a Charter Review, and see value in this kind of self-examination. But when the review is complete, I urge the Council and the Charter Review Committee to recommit to the shared leadership of the Manager / Council model, since it has served us so well.

Thank you,

Sarah Roszler

3 St Gerard Ter
North Cambridge

Attachment: 12_19 CRC Agenda + Meeting Materials (COF 2023 #243 : A communication was received from Anna Corning, Project Manager,)

City Manager Support

Sara Kimmel <sarabkimmel@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 3:13 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I support keeping the current City Manager form of government. A strong mayor system would mean the City's main executive would no longer be chosen for their managerial talent by a majority of our democratically-elected Council.

The benefit of the current system is evidenced by our current City Manager. Mr. Huang has made progress on issues that matter to residents (for example: expanding afterschool), and is best-placed to continue that momentum.

Thank you,

Sara Kimmel

14 Wright St, Cambridge, MA 02138

Please support Mayor-council, Resident Assemblies, and an elected PRAB

mike g <pixelsand@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 3:26 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Committee Review members;

I'm writing in favor of mayor-council form of government, in place of the council-manager system we currently have. I've been a resident in Cambridge for 12 years and in that time I have found local government to be opaque, confusing and exclusionary. I've heard many others echo these same sentiments. I'm sure this status quo is working out for some people who happen to be connected or privy to insider circles, it is also an affront to the ideals of democracy, and leaves most citizens of the city politically disengaged. Long term this hurts the city as a whole much more than it helps the few who benefit.

By having a mayor who is accountable to the electorate, Cambridge will finally have a true public representative with executive decision making power, as opposed to an appointed CEO who can hide behind layers of bureaucracy. This in turn will activate our residential base to become more involved, and make Cambridge a more vibrant and inclusive city, while keeping us on the cutting edge of relevancy. Most cities in the commonwealth of Massachusetts have long ago realized the benefit of this system as opposed to plan E, including Medford, Gloucester and Revere, who all moved away from the system last century in favor of council-mayor.

On a similar note, I want to also express my support for Resident Assemblies, and an elected Police Advisory Review Board. My reasons are very much in line with my reasons for supporting a council-mayor system - I want to live in a democratic and active Cambridge, where residents feel they have a stake in how the city operates. I do not want to live in a bureaucracy that functions more like a corporation than a civic entity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mike Goodman
237 Franklin Street Apt 811
Cambridge, MA, 02139

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- mike g -

Support for keeping the current City Manager system

Patricia Wagner <patricialiuwagner@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 4:34 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; schraa@gmail.com <schraa@gmail.com>; Amanda Beatty <amanda.beatty@gmail.com>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I wanted to write regarding a topic that will be heard today - I support keeping the current City Manager form of government. A strong mayor system would mean the City's main executive would no longer be chosen for their managerial talent by a majority of our democratically-elected Council.

The benefit of the current system is evidenced by our current City Manager. Mr. Huang has made progress on issues that matter to residents (for example: expanding afterschool), and is best-placed to continue that momentum. I do not believe a strong mayor system would result in meaningful, day-to-day results for our residents.

Thank you,

-Patricia Wagner

12 Clinton St, Cambridge, MA 02139

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Patricia L. Wagner

mobile: 516-633-8158 | patricialiuwagner@gmail.com

In Favor of an Elected Mayor

Charles Mitchell <cgmitchell24@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 4:40 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I write briefly in favor of a change to an elected mayor form of government, away from an unelected city manager. I ask this as a supporter of democracy.

Best,
Charles Mitchell

Attachment: 12_19 CRC Agenda + Meeting Materials (COF 2023 #243 : A communication was received from Anna Corning, Project Manager,)

Public comment

Sejal Aggarwal <aggsej@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 5:33 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Hello,

I'm a resident at 02138 Cambridge MA. I'm writing in to express my support for the Cambridge government system staying the same and not being changed to increase mayoral power.

I was unable to make the zoom meeting.

Thanks!

Sejal Aggarwal

(No subject)

Anna B. Shin <abshin76@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 5:43 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; schraa@gmail.com <schraa@gmail.com>; Amanda Beatty <amanda.beatty@gmail.com>; David Tempel <davidtempel36@gmail.com>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

We oppose in the strongest terms changing the current City Manager form of government to a "strong mayor" system. This would mean the City's main executive would no longer be chosen for their experience and managerial talent by a majority of our democratically-elected Council, and cause disruption of the work and progress our current City Manager, Mr. Yi-An Huang, has made on projects and issues that matter to residents.

As you know, the City underwent a long and thorough search for a new City Manager and Mr. Huang has held this role for only 14 months. In that short time, he has proven adept at not only overseeing the day to day operations, undertaking current and new projects, and even confronting the unforeseen tragedy of the fatal police shooting of Cambridgeport resident Sayed Faisal last winter, which caused harm and upheaval to Sayed's family and loved ones and our community at large.

We are skeptical that a strong mayor system will continue to provide residents the continuity of our well-run City. We are also aware that the most capable person to run the City may not be the candidate with the most votes considering they are elected with a small proportion of registered voters.

We urge the Committee to consider these important factors when reviewing the City charter.

Thank you,

Anna Shin & David Tempel, 240 Sidney St

support keeping the current City Manager system

Yueling <gylmrm@gmail.com>

Tue 12/5/2023 5:44 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

To support keeping the current City Manager system

Dear Charter Review Committee,

I support keeping the current City Manager form of government. A strong mayor system would mean the City's main executive would no longer be chosen for their managerial talent by a majority of our democratically-elected Council.

The benefit of the current system is evidenced by our current City Manager. Mr. Huang has made progress on issues that matter to residents (for example: expanding afterschool), and is best-placed to continue that momentum.

I also believe that current management system is the best for the majority of Cambridge residents.

Thank you,

Yueling Moran
65 Francis Ave.
Cambridge. MA 02139

Sent from my iPhone

Comments from last night

Adriane Musgrave <abmusgrave@gmail.com>

Wed 12/6/2023 9:47 AM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Committee,

I appreciate the work that you are doing on this Committee. I've been impressed by the insights you've generated and the good ideas that will, without a doubt, improve our city's governance.

I'm here tonight because I feel that two very important aspects of our current governance model, the council-manager system, have not been sufficiently highlighted, and I worry they may be lost in any transition or report that is developed.

The first is that our current system requires group decision-making and compromise, which is a rare and special thing in any political system, but especially in today's hyper-politicized environment. The City Manager cannot unilaterally decide on any specific policy change. In fact, no one person has this level of power in Cambridge. Changes must be agreed upon by a majority of city council members who have been elected by us as our representatives. This kind of group decision-making is known to:

- Generate more favorable outcomes
- Include broader perspectives
- Tap creative potential
- Allow for increased discussion
- Make wider use of resources, and
- Build ownership and buy-in

As a professional facilitator who helps groups make difficult, but critical decisions for their businesses, I know that this process can be hard to watch because it is always messy and, sometimes, the outcome is not exactly what you would have preferred. But I also know that it leads to better outcomes for a wider number of people. Under a strong mayor, which is a winner-take-all system, we would lose many, if not all, of these benefits.

The second aspect of our current system - and the one I would like to highlight in particular - is that our current system distributes power equally among people with very different backgrounds and lived experiences. I understand there is a debate about the racist origins of the city manager system, and hope that ongoing research will uncover this history. But setting that origin story aside for a moment, I would like to look at what we have created here in Cambridge over the past 80 years. We have - and have had for a number of years - an incredibly diverse group of city councilors, and that should be celebrated. To illustrate, our city councilors have:

- different racial and ethnic backgrounds
- their ages span six decades
- they have different sexual orientations
- some own and some rent their homes
- they have different educational and work histories
- and more

Getting such a diverse group to come together to make decisions for our collective future is what thousands of organizations across the country are trying to figure out. We in Cambridge are not perfect by any means, but I think we are making a good run at it, and I think it is in large part due to the system we have (as well as to the culture that supports it).

Having this level of diversity not only leads to better outcomes for our city, it also means that more of our city's residents are represented and represented equally. Representation does matter, and for our residents, we all have a better chance to see ourselves in the seats of power. Because of this, our current form of government is better aligned with diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. Under a strong mayor system, there can only be one person to fill that one very powerful seat, which seems to me to be the exact opposite of what we are seeking in terms of equity and diversity.

Thank you very much for considering my comments, and thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Adriane Musgrave

(No subject)

aku eneh <akunna.eneh@gmail.com>

Fri 12/8/2023 1:50 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee Members

I am writing to urge the Charter Review Committee to vote and advocate for the following systemic changes for our municipality:

- Change the current manger-led city government to a democratically elected mayoral- council led municipal government
- Create a Resident Assembly that has authority to send recommendations to the public for a vote
- Create a Police Review Advisory Board that is independent and run by residents who are elected.

My name is Akunna and I live in West Cambridge. I am Black, Nigerian American, and a librarian. I recently moved from Boston to Cambridge in the last three years to be with my partner, who is a lifelong resident. I lived in Boston for a little more than twenty years.. My view of Cambridge from across the river was that it is an enthusiastically democratic city, with a history of activism that made an impact across New England and the country. In particular, learning about Caroline Hunter, a Black woman who played a significant role in the international movement against apartheid in South Africa, made me realize just how central Cambridge residents have been to struggles for democracy.

So, I was surprised to learn that the city was run by an unelected city-manager. Coming from Boston, where mayoral elections stir up very necessary debate and discussion about the direction of the city among residents, I have come to see that the more people have a say, the more people feel it matters that they are involved in political affairs. The next Caroline Hunter is among Cambridge residents today, but the shape of our communities– where there is gentrification and a rise in the cost of living that is demoralizing at best– does not readily allow for her to emerge. The city can provide that space by changing how it's run and encouraging younger folks to get involved as soon as possible.

The implementation of an authoritative Resident Assembly and Police Review Advisory Board tie-in well with this aim of making space for more political engagement from Cambridge residents.

As I understand it, currently only 30% of registered voters in the city vote in local elections. At the same time, Cambridge is home to more people of color than it has been in recent decades. Many of these families of color, particularly Black families, are living at or below the federal poverty line. It's reasonable to think that many of these individuals are not systematically engaged by Cambridge's political system. I say it's reasonable because of the rampant gentrification and de-housing in Cambridge, because of lingering issues of injustice like the shooting of the young Bangladeshi man, or the harassment of youth speaking out on campuses. These are issues many in marginalized communities are concerned about. Hopefully with your advocacy on these changes, we have the opportunity to make more residents' voices matter.

Thank you for considering,
Akunna Eneh

"Benevolent Autocracy" ? || Strong Mayor? / City Manager? form of govt?

Robin Chen <rschance@gmail.com>

Fri 12/8/2023 3:16 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear readers,

I'm listening to Martin Wolf's comments about his book, <https://www.idea.int/podcasts/martin-wolf-crisis-democratic-capitalism>

...remarks about benevolent autocracy...

..and thinking about the 'how the city spends money' remarks of Niko from during the committee meeting earlier this week.

I believe that our current city manager is a remarkably kind and talented leader.

I feel well-served by our city councilors and our school committee members.

To Martin Wolf's point, there can be wide variance in autocratic leadership.

I advise caution and moderation and balance in the writing of the report.

Thank you Kathy, Miko, Anna, and all others involved in this Charter Review, for serving longer than you had planned, for conceptually designing, for researching and consulting, for active listening, for wordsmithing, for shouldering the responsibility.

It is reassuring that there will be periodic revision!

Kind regards from your fellow Cantabrigian,
Robin

Concerns with current draft wording

Jameson Quinn <jameson.quinn@gmail.com>

Tue 12/12/2023 8:36 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

I have a few concerns with the wording of the draft charter in last week's agenda.

1. The current draft states (twice) that the mayor will be elected by proportional representation. This is not possible; a single office cannot be proportional.

I have attended or reviewed the video for all the meetings of this committee, paying close attention in particular to all discussions of election methods. When discussing the voting method for choosing the mayor, there seemed to be an underlying assumption that the voting method would be as consistent as possible with the proportional STV method used for city council. Logically speaking, this would mean some variant of the system known variously as single-winner ranked choice voting (RCV) or as instant runoff voting (IRV). But this was never explicitly discussed and voted on, so I believe that the draft should simply state what was the common assumption — "a method consistent with the proportional method used for the council".

In any event, saying that the mayor should be elected through "proportional representation" (as stated in 3-1(a) and repeated in 7-3) is nonsense and must be changed somehow.

2. The draft article 7 does not reflect the votes taken on the subject, as stated in the Key Recommendations, section 1 ("Expand Enfranchisement and Equity"), subsection 5 ("Create more flexibility and modernize election voting and tabulation methods in charter language").

3. The decision points do not include a vote on staggering the mayor and council elections, which was mentioned favorably as a possibility by several committee members, and opposed by none.

Here is a proposed text for article 7 which deals with the issues above. I'm including basic text in black, and my suggestions for possible clarifications in red. I give reasoning for my suggested changes below.

Votes A motion to recommend election procedure language be changed to authorize the City to use any tabulation methods. Yes – 13, No – 0, Absent – 2 A motion that the Committee recommend that the election procedure language be changed to authorize the City to use any voting method of Proportional Representation. Yes – 13, No – 0, Absent – 2 A motion that the Committee recommend the remaining election procedures and relevant laws be compiled, updated, and drafted by the City, Election Commission, and Law Department consistent with all Charter Review Committee recommendations. Yes – 13, No – 0, Absent – 2

ARTICLE 7: ELECTIONS

SECTION 7-1: CITY ELECTION

The regular municipal election **for mayor** shall take place on the next Tuesday following the first Monday of November in every even-numbered year.

The regular municipal election for city council shall take place on the next Tuesday following the first Monday of November in every odd-numbered year.

SECTION 7-2: ELIGIBILITY OF VOTERS

(Based upon current House Bills 3576 and 671) Every citizen and noncitizen who (i) is at least 16 years old, (ii) is not temporarily or permanently disqualified by law because of corrupt practices in

respect to elections, (iii) is a resident of Cambridge at the time at the time they register, and (iv) has otherwise complied with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 51 may have their name entered on the list of voters in Cambridge and may vote therein in any municipal election.

SECTION 7-3: PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

All members of the city council and the school committee shall be elected at large by a nonpartisan proportional representation method. The city, election commission, and law department shall have the power to choose a nonpartisan proportional voting method, and associated tabulation method, that is legal under Massachusetts law. If the council desires a method that is not allowed by state law, they shall request a change from the state legislature. The choice of voting and tabulation method shall be made in order to best support enfranchisement and equity.

The mayor shall be elected at large by a system compatible with the proportional representation method above, in terms of ballot format, instructions for voters, and general principles of tabulation.

SECTIONS 7-4 AND FOLLOWING [The remaining procedural sections of the charter that have been adopted by Cambridge require updating by the Elections Commission and the Law Department in line with current best practices, modern language, the use of modern voting equipment, and current legal requirements.]

...

Why do I suggest the changes above?

I suggest that mayor and council elections should be staggered for the following reasons:

- in order to allow for the best possible candidates for each, without forcing good candidates to choose between two concurrent races.
- in order to make voting as easy as possible for the voters and election administrators.

If the two are staggered, I suggest that mayoral elections (the relatively simpler of the two) should fall on even years (in which election administrators are also dealing with federal elections).

I suggest changing "proportional representation" to "a nonpartisan proportional representation method", to clarify that there is a choice involved, but that partisan proportional methods such as closed list systems (as used in Israel, for instance) should not be considered. This leaves open all the methods discussed by the committee.

I suggest adding text about choosing voting and tabulation methods because that was the decision taken by the committee in a series of three 13-0-2 votes.

I suggest making it explicit that the council can request authorization for voting or tabulation method changes from the state legislature, because otherwise the freedom expressed in the preceding sentence may not be realized.

I suggest adding a sentence regarding the principles by which to choose voting and tabulation methods, because otherwise the election commission might focus purely on their own logistical concerns.

I suggest adding a separate sentence about mayoral elections because it simply makes no sense to say that a mayor shall be elected by a proportional method.

Sincerely,
Jameson Quinn

Attachment: 12_19 CRC Agenda + Meeting Materials (COF 2023 #243 : A communication was received from Anna Corning, Project Manager,)

Charter review comments

Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler <jivan.sobrinhowheeler@gmail.com>

Wed 12/13/2023 2:54 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Members of the Charter Review Committee,

Thank you for the months of work you all have put into this process. Being the first review the City has done since the current charter was adopted nearly 80 years ago, I'm sure there has been a lot to consider. Myself and so many others are grateful for your work.

As others on the City Council have weighed in, I wanted to briefly share my perspective on some of the topics the committee has discussed as well. As background, I served my first term on the City Council in 2020-21 and will start my second term in January 2024. In my current job, I work with local and state governments around New England and previously worked at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and bring those perspectives to my comments on the charter as well.

For a number of reasons, I am supportive of moving to an elected mayor as the head of the City's executive branch and hope to lay out a few reasons I believe this would strengthen our local government while retaining its current strengths. Myself and others are currently coming off a City Council campaign that included at least eight candidate forums. Between the forums, each of us were asked dozens of questions, but none of them included questions about the City Manager, even though it is only the City Council who has a vote on the city's chief executive. And even if the forums had asked about the City Manager, City Councillors are often loathe to level critiques publicly out of the natural tendency to avoid damaging a working relationship. These factors dampen residents' ability to engage with city government and even to understand how decisions are made.

This is particularly relevant when it comes to accountability. On issues from housing, to rodent control, to City finances, our current form of government makes it easy for City Councillors to point blame at the unelected executive branch's lack of community engagement or follow through on any given issue and for the executive branch to point blame back at unclear guidance from nine City Councillors with divergent views on many issues. While the mayors of Boston and Somerville have to regularly lay out a vision for voters about their budget priorities and how they plan to manage the City, and then get a mandate of approval from residents at the ballot box, there is no clear path for Cambridge voters to approve or disapprove of the City's executive branch. I should note here that none of this should be interpreted as critiques of the current City Manager or any particular Manager or Councillor – I'm speaking of structural considerations related to our City's charter.

One of the advantages of our current form of government that is often pointed to is professional administration of city government. I believe that strength can be retained with an elected mayor by elevating a professional manager to serve with the mayor, including through the Mayor-CAFO system the charter review committee has considered. Another advantage of our current system that is cited is helping combat corruption, but I would point out that the current system has at times been rife with corruption (see [this news article](#) from 1966 where a City Manager secured the vote of a City Councillor in exchange for making his father the City Solicitor). Boston and Somerville's current city governments headed by elected mayors are widely viewed as no more or less honest than that of Cambridge, which

suggests there are larger economic and historical factors at play in municipal corruption or the lack thereof. Incumbency advantages and the difficulty of removing an elected mayor are also regularly cited as downsides, but the fact that Cambridge has not removed a sitting City Manager in more than 30 years even when the City has faced significant challenges or disagreements with the Manager suggests that our current system has this same issue. I would also note here that there are a range of potential powers for an elected mayor that are important to consider that sometimes get elided in the high-level conversation about a Strong Mayor vs Strong City Manager system.

Beyond the question of an elected mayor, I would also like to voice support for some of the other ways to strengthen local democracy. These include having the City Solicitor appointed by the City Council, which is how Malden and a number of other cities in Massachusetts have the position structured and how the City Clerk position is currently hired. I'm also supportive of the addition of resident assemblies as a way to increase direct democracy and bring a greater array of voices into the halls of city government along with measures, and I hope the charter review committee also considers direct election for the PRAB and the addition in the charter of stipends for boards and commissions to ensure compensation for these positions becomes permanent.

Again, thank you for your work and time commitment as members of the charter review committee. If you have any questions for me, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Best,
Jivan

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Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler
jivan.sobrinhowheeler@gmail.com
724-422-9459

term limits for council members and mayor positions

jamie wong <jamiewong11@gmail.com>

Thu 12/14/2023 12:58 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Hi Charter Review Committee,

I live in mid-Cambridge currently, lived over 15 years in the city, and am a current homeowner with two kids in CPS.

I'm interested in Cambridge adopting a strong mayor policy, making the city manager accountable to voters, and most importantly I'm interested in policies to limit terms of elected government individuals. I think this is so important considering how in many governments (US and ex-US) there are situations with "elected" officials remaining in power for life even beyond their mental and physical capabilities. I believe it is an important aspect in our city government to encourage the elected officials to be efficient with their time in position and also encourage new ideas and diversity into the elected body.

Implementing term limits could be complemented by having potentially a slightly longer cycle of tenure where it makes sense. For instance on City Council, mathematically it makes sense to give 3 year terms and then every year 3 council seats go up for election. This helps focus voting also as it can be rather challenging with the ranked voting system to enumerate all 9 ranks.

Thank you for your time and service to help make Cambridge function better. Let us hope that you can implement meaningful changes that can serve the community.

Jamie Wong

12/5 Decision Points + Deliberation Information

1. City Council Compositions
 - a. *A motion that the Committee recommend maintaining 2-year terms for city council.*
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present
 - b. *A motion for the Committee to recommend Cambridge maintain an at-large city council of nine members*
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present

2. Mayor and Council President's Role on School Committee
 - a. Does the committee recommend the Mayor serve on the school committee?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present
 - b. Does the committee recommend the Mayor is automatically the chair of the school committee?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present
 - c. Does the committee recommend the city council president serve on the school committee?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present

3. Finance Article
 - a. Does the committee approve recommending the draft finance article text and reflected timeline for Mayor-CAFO-Council Form of Government?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present
 - b. Does the committee approve recommending the draft finance article text and reflected timeline for Council-Manager Form of Government?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present
 - c. Does the committee want to recommend that the city council be allowed to amend the city budget (adding funds or line items but not increasing the overall budget) prior to approval and be allowed to override the mayor's budgetary amendments or veto?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present
 - iv.

4. Felony Conviction

- a. Does the committee recommend adding the provision:

“An elected official who has been convicted of a state or federal felony while holding office shall be deemed to have vacated the office.”

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Present

5. Resident Assembly

- a. Council/Manager Form of Government

Revote:

A motion to adopt Section 2.ii.2.a.iii of the proposed draft language of Resident Assembly to read: Powers that would otherwise be exercised under state or municipal law by a city board or commission, including the Planning Board.

Yes – 3, No – 9, Present - 1, Absent – 2

- i. Does the committee recommend the above provision?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Present

- b. Strong Mayor Form of Government

- i. Does the committee wish to make a recommendation for who under the strong mayor form of government would convene a resident assembly?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Present
- ii. If Yes, should the resident assembly be convened by the City Council or Mayor?

6. Mayoral Recall

- a. What should the number of signatures be to initiate a recall?
 - i. 1000?
- b. What should the number of signatures be to trigger a recall election?
 - i. ___% of registered voters from the previous municipal election? (20% ~ 13,536)
 - ii. ___% of persons who voters in the previous municipal election? (20% ~ 4,668)
- c. Should there be a turnout threshold for the recall election to be valid?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present
 - iv. If yes, what should the turnout threshold be for the recall election

7. Group Petition

- a. Does the committee want to recommend adding a group petition provision to the charter, that is feasible for ___, but not too low that the city council is overburdened by constant group petitions. ?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Present

b. What should the signature threshold be?

8. Citizen Initiative Provision

a. Does the committee recommend adding a citizen initiative process to the charter?

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Present

b. Does the committee recommend a high or low signature threshold to get an initiative petition to get to the city solicitor review step of the initiative process?

- i. High
- ii. Low

1. If low, then a higher threshold is required to get to the next step of going in front of city council, after city solicitor reviews.

c. What should the initial signature threshold be?

9. Public Engagement and Participation Provision

a. Does the committee recommend adding the below provision to Public Engagement Article:

“The City shall provide for a system that maintains and records public comment that is publicly available.”

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Present

10. Does the committee recommend a Mayor/CAFO/Council form of government?

- a. Yes - Kaleb, Jessica, Faria, Niko, Jennifer, Kai, Ellen, Susan (8)
- b. No - Kevin, Max, Patrick, Mina, Lisa, Jim, Kathy (7)
- c. Present -

Decision Point Notes and Information

Finance Article

Timeline / Responsibilities - Mayor/CAFO/Council

- Fiscal Year: begin on July 1 and end on June 30
- Annual Budget Meeting: At least by Nov 1
 - ◆ Organized by *Mayor*
- City Council Budget Priorities: by end of Calendar year (following annual budget meeting)
- Submission of Budget: At least by May 1, by *Mayor*
 - ◆ Including the Capital Improvement Plan (same timeline)
- City Council approve by end of fiscal year

Timeline / Responsibilities - Council / Manager

- Fiscal Year: begin on July 1 and end on June 30
- Annual Budget Meeting: At least by Nov 1
 - ◆ Organized by *City Council President*
- City Council Budget Priorities: by end of Calendar year (following annual budget meeting)
- Submission of Budget: At least by May 1, by *City Manager*
 - ◆ Including the Capital Improvement Plan (same timeline)
- City Council approve by end of fiscal year

Boston Changes to Budget Process

Summary:

- Would allow the city council to increase or add line items, as long as the overall budget does not increase. Requires the mayor approve or return, if the mayor amends or rejects the budget, the city council can override with $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote.

Boston Process:

Measure Overview ([from ballotpedia](#))

“This measure made changes to the budget approval process in Boston by amending section 48 of the city charter. The measure amended the charter to allow the city council to make changes to the mayor's proposed budget before accepting it. At the time of the election, the city council could accept or reject the budget in full, or reduce certain line items. Under the charter amendment, the city council is able to increase or add line items as well (so long as the overall budget does not increase).[1][2]

The measure also required that the mayor approve or return the city council's budget within seven days. If the mayor takes no action on the budget in seven days, it becomes effective as if the mayor had signed it under the measure. If the mayor returns the council's budget with amendments or rejects it entirely, the measure gave the city council the ability to override the mayor with a two-thirds majority vote.[1][2]”

[Link to Full Measure](#)

School Committee - Mayor and City Council President Role

In 39 out of 44 mayor-council municipalities in Massachusetts the mayor serves as a member on the school committee. In only 18 of those 39 is the mayor not automatically designated as the chair.

~ In Winthrop, Watertown and Somerville the city council president also serves on the school committee.

The Mayor could be designated in the charter to be a member of the school committee but not default the chair, but the school committee could opt to elect them as the chair.

Examples of Mayor and Council President Role Text:

- Somerville: *“shall consist of the mayor and the president of the city council, ex officials [ex officio], neither of whom shall serve as chair;”*
- Framingham: *“The mayor shall serve, by virtue of office, as an ex-officio member of the school committee and shall only vote to break a tie vote and shall be ineligible to serve as chair, vice-chair or clerk.”*
- Newton: *“The mayor shall serve, ex officio, as a member of the school committee with full power to vote.”*
- Springfield: *“The school committee shall consist of the mayor, who shall be the chairman”*

See more details and examples on the comparables chart - [linked here](#).

Felony Conviction

Massachusetts State Law Chapter 279, Section 30 - [Link](#)

“If a convict sentenced by a court of the commonwealth or of the United States to imprisonment in the state prison or by a court of the United States to a federal penitentiary for a felony holds an office under the constitution or laws of the commonwealth at the time of sentence, it shall be vacated from the time of sentence.”

- If someone is not sentenced to jail time they would still be able to keep their seat.

Sample Language:

Amherst: *SECTION 9.11: FELONY CONVICTION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS An elected official convicted of a state or federal felony while holding office shall be deemed to have vacated the office.*

Resident Assembly

One case study from Healthy Democracy - Eugene, Oregon had a Mayor-Council form of government.

- Task was “advised the City of Eugene on questions related to its Middle Housing Code Changes Project”

Another example from Santa Monica also a mayor-council, initiated by Public Works staff - [news article link](#).

Recall

See below table for comparables - [table linked here](#).

- Ballotopedia List of Recall Campaigns in MA- https://ballotopedia.org/Recall_campaigns_in_Massachusetts#By_year

City	Pop.	# Reg. Voters at Prev Muni. Election	# Voted at Prev. Muni. Election	Turnout at Prev Muni. Election	# Signatures to Initiate	# Signatures to Trigger Election	~ # of Signs. to Trigger Election	Turnout threshold	Notes
Bedford	14,161	10,295	1,354	13%	10	10% of registered voters	1,030	n/a	allows recalled candidate to be on ballot
Chelsea	38,889	17,709	1,548	9%	300	20% of total persons who voted at the most recent muni. election	310	40% of eligible voters	
Easthampton	16,211	12,861	2,871	22%	400	20% of total number of voters at the most recent city election	574	n/a	
Everett	48,557	22,602	4,382	19%	500	20% of voters in the city	876	20% of the voters at most recent reg. city election	
Fall River	93,884	54,383	10,953	20%	10	5% of registered voters	2,719	n/a	
Framingham	71,265	42,496	4,252	10%	400	15% of registered voters at most recent reg. muni. election	6,374	n/a	
Pittsfield	43,641	30,804	9,595	31%	500	20% of the voters of the city	1,919	20% of the voters at the most recent reg. city election	
Cambridge	117,090	67,681	23,339	34%		20% of registered voters	13,536		
						20% of voters from prev muni. election	4,668		

Attachment: 12_19_CRC Agenda + Meeting Materials (COF 2023 #243 : A communication was received from Anna Corning, Project Manager,)

Group Petition

“The city council or the school committee shall hold a public hearing and act with respect to every petition which is addressed to it, which is signed by __ voters or more, and which seeks the passage of a measure.”

Newton - 50

Everett - 100

Watertown - 150

Chelsea - 150

Amherst - 150

Easthampton - 100

Sample Language:

Framingham:

Group Petitions Action Required: The council or the school committee shall hold a public hearing on every petition which is addressed to it, which is signed by one hundred (100) voters, or more, and which seeks the passage of a measure. The hearing shall be held by the council or the school committee, or, in either case, by a committee or subcommittee thereof, and after the hearing shall be held, the council or school committee shall respond to the petitioners not later than thirty (30) days after the hearing is completed. Hearings on two or more petitions filed under this section may be held on the same date and at the same time and place. The secretary of the council or the secretary of the school committee shall mail notice of the hearing to the ten persons whose names appear first on the petition at least seven (7) days before the hearing. Notice by publication in a local newspaper not less than seven (7) nor more than fourteen (14) days prior to the date set for the public hearing shall be at public expense. Notice shall also be posted on the municipal bulletin board.

Citizen Initiative Process

Typical process is there is an initial signature requirement that triggers the petition process and the next stage where the city solicitor reviews the petition for legality.

- A few communities keep this number very low and then require a higher bar for the initiative to reach city council review
 - Examples
 - Newton: initially requires 50 voters to sign petition and then requires an additional 10% of total registered votes to get petition to city council for action, assuming city solicitor gives sign off
 - Everett: initially requires 250 voters to sign and then an additional 10% of total voters
- Others keep the bar high for the initial process to trigger petition process and reach city solicitor review stage
 - Examples
 - Watertown and Easthampton initially require 10% of registered voters to sign
 - Chelsea initially requires 20% of registered voters to sign
- Following the initial collection of signatures the city solicitor reviews an initiative petition for legality, and then presents the response for city council.
- City Council actions also differ by community but typically either they can pass the petition or reject
- If they reject, voters have the opportunity, by collecting additional signatures typically about 5% more, to move the initiative petition to a ballot question.