

A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

August 1, 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, August 1, 2023

- I. Roll Call 5:30 PM
- II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born
- 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 from Valarie Bonds, regarding at-large councilors and outreach
 - ii.* A communication from Dan Totten, regarding ward representation
 - iii.* A communication from Heather Kelly, regarding term limits and compensation for elected officials
 - iv.* A communication from Matthew Boyes-Watson, regarding accountability and election of the mayor
 - Other Meeting Materials
- IV. Public Comment
 - Members of the public are invited to share their ideas or comments with the committee.
- V. Accountability Provisions Discussion
 - **Facilitator:** Anna, Pat, Mike. **Goal:** Discuss provisions related to addressing accountability

At-Large-Status

vanbs <educatorvanbs@gmail.com>

Tue 7/18/2023 11:22 AM

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

Good afternoon,

Since city councillors are at large in representing the entire city, why do I not see candidates who live do not live in Cambridgeport reaching out during their candidacy on this side of Cambridge?

Hope to see you later this afternoon.

Regards,

M. Bonds
Rivermark
812 Memorial Drive
Cambridgeport

tonight's meeting/oppose ward representation

Dan Totten <dantottencambridge@gmail.com>

Tue 7/18/2023 11:36 AM

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

To the members of the Charter Review Committee:

I'm writing ahead of tonight's meeting to strongly oppose the establishment of ward representation in Cambridge. I am sure that those who propose this are doing so with nothing but the best of intentions, but it seems clear to me that such a system would further entrench the current inequities that we face. The beauty of our current proportional representation system is that it allows for ward representation but it also demands that those councillors who are elected on the back of a single neighborhood must represent the entire city when they take office. Imagine a councillor from West Cambridge or Baldwin with no official obligation to care about the plight of anyone living in the eastern half of the city. That's what you would be moving to with ward seats. The current system challenges all nine councillors to represent everybody. Not all of them do that, but why should we absolve them of the paper responsibility to do so?

PR itself is working effectively at our equity goals as evidenced by the mountain of progress made over the last several years including the Affordable Housing Overlay. The problem is not the council - it's the city manager. The fact that this commission has failed to see that fact probably means that whatever ballot question you end up advancing will be a bitter fight. I will certainly urge my friends to vote NO on any proposal which does not confront the fundamental injustice of the city's unelected executive and the unreasonable concentration of power that they currently enjoy. We may need an entirely new process and a commission that is democratically elected by the people in order to get at this root cause of injustice. Who cares what the leader of the legislative branch is called when our city manager is unaccountable to the people? If we aren't thinking radically about how to improve the lives of the most vulnerable residents of our city, what are we even doing?

All the best,

Dan Totten
54 Bishop Allen Drive #2

Term limits / compensation for elected officials

Heather Kelly <heatherkelly1969@gmail.com>

Fri 7/21/2023 1:40 PM

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

Hello,

I have long felt that there should be consecutive term limits for both City Council members and School Committee members. I think a limit of two consecutive terms before the candidate has to sit out a term would encourage others to run (and make it possible for them to win.) Governing bodies will benefit from fresh perspectives, and no candidate should be enabled to sit on a governing body for decades just because they have an entrenched voter base (and particularly when that base has very little current stake in the matters at hand.)

Perhaps Cambridge could institute a program similar to [Running Start](#), except that, instead of focusing only on young women, it could be for any community member (especially from traditionally underrepresented and under-resourced populations) who would like to explore the idea of getting involved with city government.

Additionally, compensation should be reviewed to make sure it is in line with the compensation received by peers in city government in comparable communities. There should be no positions that are essentially sinecures, because that also contributes to candidates who have come to rely on that income and hold tightly to their offices.

Which leads me to ask: What transparency or accountability is there in terms of work product or numbers of hours worked? I know attendance at meetings and city events, as well as participation on working committees, is expected, but beyond that, it seems a little murky. Some office-holders send out progress reports to their supporters voluntarily, but is there any rule that compels them to account for what they actually do to earn their salary? To be clear: I have no doubt that most elected officials work hard (and may even put in more hours than would be expected), but it would be helpful to know that there are mechanisms to ensure that taxpayer money is being responsibly spent.

Thank you for your time,

Heather Kelly
Resident of North Cambridge for 20+ years
CPSD parent
Board member, Friends of the Center for Families
Parent Liaison, Friends of Cambridge Athletics (FOCA)

P.S. The postcard you sent out a while back has an incorrect email address on it.

Thank you

Matthew Boyes-Watson <mbw@flaggstreetstudio.com>

Wed 7/26/2023 2:26 PM

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

Cc:Nina Berg <nb@flaggstreetstudio.com>

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to join the discussion about the charter review. It was lovely to meet so many of you!

We wanted to reiterate our main concerns as residents, voters, collaborators:

- We believe the Mayor should be directly elected.
- We believe there needs to be stronger mechanisms to keep the City Manager accountable to the Council, the elected representatives of the people.

Specifically, we are curious how the policy order and response mechanism, as well as the budgetary process, might be changed or supplemented to allow greater accountability. We look forward to following the process!

Cheers,

Matt and Nina