

A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

September 5, 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, September 5, 2023

- I. Roll Call 5:30 PM
- II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born
- III. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from the meeting of August 1, 2023
- IV. Meeting Materials Submitted to the Committee to be placed on file
 - Communications from Committee Members
 - i. A communication from Susan Shell, regarding methods of ranked choice voting.
 - Communications from Council Members
 - Communications from the Public
 - i. A communication from Lauren Gibbs, regarding election of city council, city manager and school committee
 - Other Meeting Materials
- V. Public Comment
 - Members of the public are invited to share their ideas or comments with the committee.
- VI. Review Resident Participation Mechanisms: Free Petition, Initiative, Referendum, Recall
 - **Facilitator:** Anna, Pat, Mike. **Goal:** Review Collins Center memo and discussion if any of these provisions should be included in the charter.
- VII. Review Drafted Language for public tracking mechanism of council policy orders and other measures
 - **Facilitator:** Anna, Pat, Mike. **Goal:** Review drafted language, discussion and vote

VIII. Review Revised Drafted Language for City Council Goal Setting and Budget Priorities provisions

- **Facilitator:** Anna, Pat, Mike. **Goal:** Review drafted language, discussion and vote

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, AUGUST 1, 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, August 1, 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 – Present

Kevin Chen – Present

Max Clermont -Present

Jennifer Gilbert – Absent

Kai Long – Present

Patrick Magee – Present

Mina Makarios – Present

Lisa Peterson – Present

Ellen Shachter – Present

Susan Shell – Absent

Jim Stockard – Present

Kathleen Born – Present

Present – 13, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized Member Ellen Shachter who made a motion to place the written communications from the public on file.

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 – Absent

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarious – Yes

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Absent

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 13, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born opened Public Comment.

Heather Hoffman commented on communication within the City and on public records requests.

Anna Corning, Project Manager, Member Kai Long, and Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo offered comments on the Charter Review Committee meet and greet at Tasty Burger that was held on July 25, 2023. Members shared and reviewed topics that were discussed during the community gathering. Anna Corning also shared her experience at the North Cambridge location of the CEOC and the outreach that was done there.

Anna Corning shared on the screen the upcoming meeting dates and planned topics of discussion (Attachment A). Committee members offered suggestions on moving forward and including additional topics of interest related to the Charter to discuss. Anna Corning reminded Committee members that in all the Committee discussions, the goal is to come to an agreement on what new provisions or changes to provisions members want to make to the Charter as well as to provide additional context and supporting elements.

Anna Corning opened discussion to Committee members on an accountability memo (Attachment B) that was sent from the Collins Center to Charter Review Committee members. Michael Ward from the Collins Center offered a detailed review of the memo. Staff from the Collins Center and Anna Corning were available to respond and help clarify questions and concerns from Committee members.

Anna Corning shared that they wanted to change the focus of discussion to City Council setting strategic goals, City Council budget priorities, and the City Manager review process. Anna Corning shared and reviewed a draft chart on the screen reflecting a three-year general time

frame around budget priorities and the City Manager Evaluation Process (Attachment C). Anna Corning and Committee Members offered suggestions and comments on how the Charter Review Committee could potentially revise the time frame for the two topics in ways they believe would be the most successful for the City. Anna Corning shared on the screen proposed language for City Council Strategic Goals and City Council Budget Priorities (Attachment D) and asked Committee members to share what they think is important to include in the Charter.

Member Jim Stockard shared that he agreed with all the proposed elements in the City Council Strategic Goal section and noted that even though the City Council and the City Manager are two separate parts of the government, it would be important to look at them as a team working together to set goals and collaborate.

Member Kaleb Abebe shared concerns about the possibility of the City Council and City Manager not agreeing when it comes to goal settings. Anna Corning noted that the main goal right now is focusing on City Council goals with the possibility of bringing the City Manager into the process and seeing what is achievable.

Member Kai Long asked how these goals are relayed to the public. Anna Corning shared that at a future date, the Committee will be discussing City Manager responsiveness to Policy Orders and public awareness. Member Long suggested that in relation to budget priorities, the City Council within their budget is given funding to use towards specific goals of the Council.

Member Lisa Peterson noted that it is important that goals and priorities work together to be successful. Member Peterson suggested adding public tracking of the goals, meeting benchmarks, and the importance of having those available to the public.

Chair Born shared that these goals are here to help make the City Council, as a body, the policy making and governing body of the City.

Member Patrick Magee shared that having the goal setting start at the beginning of new City Council terms will help normalize the political culture of the City. He noted that City Council candidates can promote their elections with their proposed goals and policies, which can then be potentially adopted in the new term. Member Magee shared that by default it would make candidates and those elected more accountable.

Anna Corning shared that moving forward, she will take all the thoughts and comments on the draft City Council Strategic Goals and use them as provisions to add to the current Charter.

Member Jim Stockard offered concerns with some of the language in the potential elements within the City Council Budget Priorities and provided suggestions on how it could be revised. Member Ellen Shachter shared concerns about the Executive Branch and City Council having different budget priorities and how the two can work together to support Council budget priorities.

Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo suggested having a written report and a public meeting or forum related to Council budget priorities, and noted the importance of having more consistent engagement.

Member Lisa Peterson shared that Council goals should be tied to the budget priorities and vice versa.

The Charter Review Committee adjourned at approximately 7:30p.m.

Attachment A – Upcoming meeting dates and topics.

Attachment B – Memo from the Collins Center to the Charter Review Committee.

Attachment C – Draft three-year budget priorities and City Manager review.


Attachment D – Proposed language for City Council strategic goals, budget priorities, and City Manager review.

submission for the Committee

Susan Shell <susan.shell@bc.edu>

Mon 8/28/2023 4:05 PM

To: Corning, Anna <acorning@cambridgema.gov>

 1 attachments (3 MB)
ranked choice voting.pdf;

Dear Anna,

I wonder if you might please pass this along (with attachment) to Committee Members and interested members of the public.

With many thanks,
Best, Susan

Dear Members of the Cambridge Charter Review Committee,

I came across this article today on different methods of ranked choice voting and thought it might be of interest. The authors assume that ranked choice voting is a good thing, and then wonder about the distorting tendencies of various methods (e.g, immediate run off [our system] vs something called the “Condorcet” method). Taking up the question of whether ranked choice voting tends to favor or suppress voter polarization (as is generally thought), they come to the perhaps surprising conclusion that while the suppression effect is true where there is a significant number of voters “in the middle,” where there are fewer in the middle and more at the two extremes, the immediate run-off system tends to produce more polarized results -- i.e., ones less reflective than would be strictly representative of the middle voter or the voter willing and eager to compromise. In short, where a constituency is polarized, or tending in that direction, our current system may tend to make the situation worse. I’m certainly not equipped to judge the more technical aspects of the article, but thought the argument might merit a look.

Hope you are all having a wonderful August,

Best, Susan

How Mayor, City Councilors, School Committee Chair & Vice Chair And City Manager Are Elected Or Selected

Lauren Gibbs <ladarelkg@verizon.net>

Mon 8/28/2023 2:12 PM

To:Nolan, Patricia <pnolan@cambridgema.gov>;Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>;City Manager <CityManager@CambridgeMA.GOV>
Cc:Hayes, Patrick <phayes@cambridgema.gov>;**City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>**

Thanks, Patty, for directing me to the Cambridge Charter Review Committee, which I had not been thinking about before you recommended it to me.

To the Cambridge Charter Review Committee, please take my 3 remarks to City Council, School Committee, and City Manager under Patty Nolan's email as well as a 4th point in the next paragraph into consideration in your review of the Cambridge City Charter by December 31st.

I think the City Manager should be elected as well as the Mayor, Councilors, and School Committee Chair and Vice Chair! So I am sending this message to you too, City Manager Huang, and cc'ing City Council just on this point of election rather than selection of the Cambridge City Manager in the future. If we are having a City Manager who actually runs Cambridge, that person should be elected, not selected, from my perspective.

The first 3 remarks are in this email as well as in the previous email to City Council, School Committee, and City Manager copied below Patty Nolan's email to me - but with the fact that it might be 11 wards or 13 school districts and it might be City Charter rather than City Council deciding the number of districts and at-large members of the City Council and in point #2 and with titles capitalized throughout the email. I have placed highlighting on the new parts of point #2.

My first point is that the City Mayor should be elected rather than selected by the reigning Councilors and the Vice Chair of the School Committee should be done by who has the most votes. I don't want people telling me who to select as Mayor or as Chair or Vice Chair of the School Committee. There have been a number of times when I have not liked who was selected as Mayor by other Councilors or Vice Chair by other School Committee members. I think Sumbil Siddiqui is a fine Mayor and could be re-elected Mayor multiple times as she was this session, but there have been Mayors in the past who should not have been Mayor in my opinion, and Vice Chairs of School Committee who should NOT in my opinion have been Vice Chair. In 2015 and 2017, on School Committee, Patty Nolan got the most votes, but the School Committee gave the job to Fred Fantini, Manikka Bowman, and Kathleen Kelly. Don't let the City Council - OR the School

Committee - do that again! Let the people - NOT the Councilors or the School Committee members - make the decision!

My second point: There should be election by district of Cambridge with some at-large members, whether there are 5 or 6 by district (East, West, North, The Port, Central and maybe Kendall) or by library (Main, Boudreau, Central Square, Collins, O'Neill, O'Connor, Valente) or by ward (1-11) or by school district (13 - 12 plus the high school) with 4, 3, or 2 elected at-large - or some other configuration of members determined by the City Council or the City Charter in advance of a vote. The concerns of one neighborhood are not necessarily the concerns of another neighborhood.

My third point: The Mayor should be a member of School Committee but NOT necessarily the Chair of School Committee. The education of students is NOT NECESSARILY the perspective of the City Council, which, in my perspective, is WAY too DEVELOPER-oriented for my taste. Let people decide for themselves what they want - don't decide FOR people!

Lauren Gibbs, 3 Newport Road #1, 02140, ladarelkg@verizon.net, 617-441-8892

On Monday, August 28, 2023 at 11:29:53 AM EDT, Nolan, Patricia <pnolan@cambridgema.gov> wrote:

Dear Lauren Gibbs,

Thank you for reaching out to the council and thank you for your insights on local government. I wanted to respond to point you in the direction of the Charter Review Committee if you haven't already been aware of their work. Over a year ago, I worked with my fellow councilors to convene a committee of residents to comprehensively review our city government and to consider whether it makes sense to make any changes to our system of government to make it more accountable, responsive, and democratic. They are preparing to deliver a report to the City Council at the end of 2023 that will recommend charter changes. If you haven't sent this email yet to the committee, I would highly recommend you reach out to them via email (they are copied on this email). They also meet regularly every other Tuesday from 5:30pm-7:30pm and welcome public comment and input. You can also submit feedback or ideas on their website, which has information about their process and other charter related resources: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/charterreview>.

I appreciate you thinking so critically about our government, and I hope you will share your insights with the Charter Review Committee. Please don't hesitate to reach out directly to me or my aide, Patrick, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Patty

Patricia Nolan

Cambridge City Council

She/her/hers

Aide: Patrick Hayes

phayes@cambridgema.gov

617-349-4280

From: Lauren Gibbs <ladarelkg@verizon.net>
Sent: Monday, August 7, 2023 2:35 PM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; School Comm <schoolcom@cpsd.us>
Cc: City Manager <CityManager@CambridgeMA.GOV>
Subject: How Mayor and City Councilors are elected

Dear City Council, School Committee, and I cc City Manager Huang as well,

My first point is that the City Mayor should be elected rather than selected by the reigning councilors and the vice chair of the School Committee should be done by who has the most votes. I don't want people telling me who to select as Mayor or as Chair or Vice Chair of the School Committee. There have been a number of times when I have not liked who was selected as mayor by other councilors or vice chair by other school committee members. I think Sumbil Siddiqui is a fine mayor and could be re-elected mayor multiple times as she was this session, but there have been mayors in the past who should not have been mayor in my opinion, and vice chairs of School Committee who should NOT in my opinion have been vice chair. In 2015 and 2017, on School Committee, Patty Nolan got the most votes, but the School Committee gave the job to Fred Fantini, Manikka Bowman, and Kathleen Kelly. Don't let the City Council - OR the School Committee - do that again! Let the people - NOT the Councilors or the School Committee members - make the decision!

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