

A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

January 3, 2023 @ 5:30 p.m.

REMOTE ONLY – VIA ZOOM

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this meeting will be REMOTE ONLY via ZOOM.

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

Meeting ID: 832 5311 8929

One tap mobile +13092053325,,83253118929# US

Agenda Items – Tuesday, January 3, 2023

- I. Roll Call
- II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born
- III. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from meeting December 20, 2022 and planning committee meeting December 13, 2022
- IV. Meeting Materials Submitted to the Committee to be placed on file
 - Communications from Committee Members
 - Communications from Council Members
 - Communications from the Public
 - Other Meeting Materials
- V. Next Steps: Panel, City Presentations, Interviews, Community Engagement (10 minutes)
 - **Facilitator:** Anna.
- VI. Synthesis of 12/20 Round Table Discussion (20 minutes)
 - **Facilitator:** Libby. **Goal:** Review major themes and topics
- VII. Review of Cambridge Charter and General Law in modern form (60 minutes)
 - **Facilitator:** Libby and Anna. **Goal:** Walk through model charter with current Cambridge provisions. Committee members should ask questions, flag areas for consideration, propose changes.
- VIII. Public Comment
 - Members of the public are invited to share their ideas or comments with the committee

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 20, 2022**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, December 20, 2022. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30p.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via zoom.

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

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

Present – 15 Absent – 0. Quorum established.

Chair Born opened the meeting with the Adoption of the Minutes of the December 6, 2022, meeting and recognized a motion from member Jim Stockard and seconded by member Ellen Shachter.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaled 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 – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born, Chair - Yes

Yes – 15 No – 0. Motion passes.

The Chair noted that there was one Communication submitted from Dr. Jameson Quinn (ATTACHMENT A).

The Chair recognized a motion from member Jim Stockard and seconded by member Mosammat Faria Afreen to place the Communication on file.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaled 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 – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born, Chair - Yes

Yes – 15 No – 0. Motion passes.

Anna Corning began the meeting by reviewing the next steps for interviews and opened discussion to members for their input.

Member Ellen Shachter shared their thoughts and concerns about interview questions, and suggested the focus be more on engagement with the City Council and less focus on the charter.

Jim Stockard noted that he didn't want to raise expectations for residents and that the committee should try and be as straight forward as possible to achieve goals for the City.

Member Jennifer Gilbert had a clarifying question on the surveys and suggested if they should be anonymous because people may be more truthful with their answers. She noted that she hoped to interview external people who have no ties to Cambridge.

Anna Corning noted that it was a good idea to make the survey anonymous to help people feel as comfortable as possible.

Member Susan Shell made suggestions on people the Committee could interview.

Member Max Clermont agreed with comments and questions from other members and noted that starting public engagement and seeing how the process will go sooner is a good idea, Committee needs to start seeing data.

Member Lisa Peterson noted that if we are expecting to have thirty minute or longer interviews, members should limit the questions to only four or five. She also suggested that the Committee look at current and past School Committee members. Most people will have basic opinions, but others will have very detailed feedback. She suggested focusing on elections and voting.

Chair Born noted that she liked all the suggestions being made by members and is eager to get started with the process. She noted that it's ok if discussion is ongoing during the work being done.

Member Kai Long stressed her concerns about the length of the list and questioned if the members can organize the list so it's helpful to the Committee.

Member Mosammat Faria Afreen shared concerns about talking to people who are already in the City government, and noted that the Committees time should be focused on those who are not currently within the government.

Member Mina Makarious noted the interviews could be productive if the Committee asks to have members from City Council and other boards and committees allow the Charter Review Committee interviews to be on their agenda in order to get the feedback the Committee is looking for and it would be an opportunity for residents to be able to listen in on multiple occasions.

Member Lisa Peterson suggested doing smaller focus groups and noted the importance of interviewing neighborhood groups. Noting that the Committee should look in to interviewing executive directors to get their insight on what is working and what is not working for them as employees.

Chair Born commented that she has spoken with the City Manager, and he is more than willing to be interviewed.

Member Jennifer Gilbert shared concerns about acting on the community engagement and interview plans. Jennifer also suggested having the option for Panel or individual survey to help people being interviewed feel comfortable and whichever setting.

Member Max Clermont had clarifying questions for community outreach.

Anna Corning noted that in January there will be two public forums. The first on Tuesday, January 24th at a Library for residents to provide comments and then the following Saturday residents would have the opportunity to participate virtually.

Patrick Hayes Emphasize it is up to the committee to engage with the community and do the hard work.

Anna Corning opened discussion to all members on what is working about the City Council/City Manager form of government, what are the challenges about the City Council/City Manager form of government and should the city form of government stay the same or change. What have you heard is working well, what needs improvement from members of the community.

Members went into discussion about the challenges and concerns they feel as residents. Noting that there is a disconnect between the political side of the government and professional side. Many members commented that they were intrigued by a strong Mayor form government. Members noted that a goal for the Charter should be to strengthen the government we already have, and that we should have a government that focuses on helping residents and getting things done, and that it's slow to make change in Cambridge. There were comments made that there is divide between the rich and the poor, and Cambridge does not have a strong middle class. Some members suggested looking at the School Committee as an option to help with planning and reorganizing. A big concern was voting for politicians and not seeing the outcome that was promised.

Chair Born noted that the discussions tonight were very meaningful, and every member had brought great suggestions and thoughts forward. She thanked members for their input.

Public Comment

John Hawkinson offered informational comments, noting that much of the assessment of the system seem right now to depend on the new City Manager and the Council supervision of him.

Anna Corning offered members to discuss if there were any lingering questions or comments based on the discussions of the meeting.

Chair Born suggested the Committee discuss how they would like to proceed with the next meeting, with hopes that members can take the framework that has been provided and use it to focus on future discussions.

Member Mosammat Faria Afreen stressed the importance of being able to explain form of government and how the city government operates to people.

Member Jennifer Gilbert noted the importance of bringing actual data to the discussion, so members have something to look at and go off of.

Member Jim Stockard suggested the Committee look at the National City Manager Association to see what they could offer in terms of evaluation formats and histories of relationships between Council members and Managers.

Chair Born and Anna Corning thanked everyone for their participation.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:28p.m.

The Charter Review Committee received one written communication, Attachment A

Clerk's Note: The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/384?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=b0c14ed8855894066df36616103f52e6

MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Subcommittee Members

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo
Jennifer Gilbert
Kai Long
Lisa Peterson
Susan Shell
Jim Stockard
Kathleen Born, Chair

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2022. The meeting was called to order at approximately 11:00a.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via zoom.

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

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Absent *
Jennifer Gilbert – Present
Kai Long – Present
Lisa Peterson – Present
Susan Shell – Present
Jim Stockard – Present
Kathleen Born – Present

Present – 6, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

***Jessica DeJesus Acevedo was marked present at 11:30a.m.**

Also present at the meeting were Elliot Veloso, Assistant City Solicitor for the Law Department, and Elizabeth Corbo, Human Resource Auditor an Employment Operations Analyst for the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management.

Anna Corning gave opening remarks about what the purpose of the Subcommittee should be. That members in the subcommittee should be working towards creating an overall road map for the committee and a list of what topics the Committee might cover.

Member Lisa Peterson commented that it's important to think about the timeline and trying to create both the committee and subcommittee, so topics are discussed in a time appropriate manner.

Member Susan Shell shared concerns about the process of creating a new Plan E, and if the public would agree on topics discussed in meetings. They noted that the possibility of doing a survey to get feedback could help with these challenges.

Anna Corning noted that we could rely on Community groups to help document the broader themes to help the public figure out what is or is not working.

Elizabeth Corbo noted that the subcommittee will impact all the decisions that the Charter Review will ultimately make. They stressed that the Charter Review Committee is the representative government committee, the voice. Members should feel comfortable in what they are doing.

Kai Long noted that with government you want the thought process to be more thoughtful. Shared concerns about how the Committee can start this process with out the input of residents. They spoke against surveys and suggested the Committee find a better way to reach out to residents.

Member Jim Stockard commented on the power and assignment given to the Charter Review Committee and reiterated the importance of reaching out to residents in a form that is not a survey.

Elizabeth Corbo stressed concerns that the Charter Review Committee members may not understand the importance of their role as members.

Members went into discussion about questions and concerns they have about what is working and what is not working in Cambridge and noting they need time to be able to discuss the pros and cons, getting familiar with strong Mayor/strong Manager, talk about concerns, and encouraging conversation. Members noted the importance of focusing on Cambridge government more and to not be so abstract by looking at other cities and towns. Other concerns that were brought forward was a timeline and if the Charter Review would have enough time to accomplish their goals.

Elliot Veloso reviewed the timeline that was given to Chair Born from the Law Department and reiterated some of the language that is written in the Council Order and Charter language, and that there is a possibility for extension.

Anna Corning suggested putting together an interview structure to interview past and current employees to get feedback and noted she had sent out a list to members already.

Member Susan Shell suggested getting material ahead of time to make the time they have for these meetings more useful.

Member Jennifer Gilbert had questions and comments about the list of interviewees and encouraged that the Committee add as many voices as possible.

Member Jim Stockard noted that all residents should be represented fairly.

The Chair, Kathleen Born noted the importance of getting started so the Committee can get to the conversation that needs to happen to reach goals and questioned how often it would be useful for the subcommittee to continue meeting.

Members Susan Shell, Jessica DeJesus Acevedo, and Kai Long had suggestions, questions, and recommendations on how the Committee can go forward with interviewing people. Jessica DeJesus Acevedo stressed the importance of engaging with the community.

Anna Corning thanked members for giving their time for the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:04a.m.

Clerk's Note: The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[Dec 13, 2022 5:30 PM - Charter Review Committee - Committee Meeting \(granicus.com\)](#)

Discrimination policy

Andy Zucker <andyzucker@gmail.com>

Fri 12/16/2022 8:21 PM

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

Hello.

I don't know to what extent, if any, discrimination policies relate to the Charter. I am aware that the Cambridge Human Rights Ordinance (Chapter 2.76.160) and also the Massachusetts Civil Rights Act enjoin people from discriminating on the basis of race, gender, color, etc.

However, I was surprised to learn several years ago that the Cambridge Human Rights Commission does not accept discrimination complaints against city staff, agencies, or departments (Chapter 2.76.120). Therefore, citizens must use a more distant, time-consuming, impersonal bureaucracy in the event that there is evidence of discrimination by the city or its officials. It can take many months or more for complaints to be considered by Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, their rules are not the same as in Cambridge's ordinance, and no reasons are provided in cases where they find no violation.

Are there clear rules in the Charter about preventing discrimination? Are there avenues within Cambridge to raise issues of discrimination? Generally, is this matter within the purview of the Charter Review Committee?

Andy Zucker
35 Winslow Street

Excited about your mission - some thoughts

John Hanratty <john@avon-hill.com>

Sun 12/18/2022 1:22 PM

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

Please share with the group and/or include in the records or distribute appropriately.

I viewed your December 6 meeting video and am encouraged and excited about your mission to write a new city charter. I hope to attend future meetings live. This effort is essential. Our city government's lack of focus and a cohesive plan has escalated residents' dissatisfaction. We're continually surprised and confounded by City Council initiatives.

Here are a few observations.

I agree with the sentiments about the need for a more inclusionary government. Currently, the City Council exists to represent the people but has no responsibility to do so. We elect Councilors "at large" so they do not represent a specific city neighborhood or group. Instead, they self-select causes or issues to champion, leaving many in Cambridge without representation. One solution is to have precincts vote for their own representative so that it's clear where loyalties lie.

Some version of a town hall meeting might help, but my experience as a citizen is that participation is a full-time project, requiring more time than busy people have. Today, this endeavor requires monitoring all the new and often unexpected topics for City Council meetings every week. Many issues are mundane or low impact, but others have far-reaching consequences that require research and organization. One-topic special interests are well prepared, but citizens must organize on the spot. In my experience, public comment, letters, and petitions have little impact on swaying decisions already made. Regular people with jobs and families don't have the time to participate in this process. I don't have the answer, but my experience is that it is tough to participate in the Cambridge government.

Last thought, what is the job description for city government? The first step before deciding on Mayor vs. City Manager vs. Town Hall is formulating the responsibilities and goals for the city government. Maybe, you did this in previous meetings, if so please refer me to your work. Diversity, equity, and justice are a given, but the following items are currently unclear.

- **Who does the government represent?** Residents, property owners, businesses, visitors, employees, special-interest groups, self-selected ideals, ...
- **What are the priorities?** Quality of life, neighborhood/community, social-economic opportunity, cultural diversity, world citizenship, ... How we settle conflicts?
- **What is the scope of city government?** How should the government recognize and tackle local vs. regional vs. global problems?
- How does the government responsibly **manage and spend tax-payer money?** Are there checks and balances? Why should we incur debt to finance projects, given our huge tax base? We're missing a transparent project budgeting process and reporting.
- **How to implement accountability?** Do projects have clear goals that are measured? How do we identify and fix failed initiatives? How do we gather input and data to avoid unintended consequences?

The above is not a complete list, but it might spur some thought. I look forward to a new inclusive city government.

John Hanratty
Porter Square