

A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

November 8, 2022 @ 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

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+13126266799,,83253118929# US (Chicago)

Agenda Items – Tuesday, November 8, 2022

- I. Roll Call
- II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born
- III. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from meeting of October 25, 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. Collins Center Memo Overview and Discussion on Major Themes from Committee Discussion on 10/25
 - Committee members should review the Collins Center memo on major themes and come prepared to discuss the themes outlined and any questions, comments or additions you might have
- VI. Values Statement Discussion
- VII. Public Comment
 - Members of the public are invited to bring their own ideas based on the Collins Center prompts for consideration by the Committee and the Collins Center.
- VIII. Conclusion of Meeting

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, October 25, 2022. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30 p.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 public meeting was remote via zoom.

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

NAME	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT
Kaleb Abebe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mosammat Faria Afreen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kathleen Born (Chairperson)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nikolas Bowie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kevin Chen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max Clermont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jennifer Gilbert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kai Long	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patrick Magee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mina Makarious	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lisa Peterson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ellen Shachter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Susan Shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jim Stockard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VOTE TOTALS	13	0	0	2
	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT

13 members recorded as present. 2 members recorded as absent.

The Chair gave a brief introduction of the meeting and apologized for the cancellation of the previous meeting. The Chair reaffirmed her commitment to continuing the work of the Committee and working within the Open Meeting law. The Chair then introduced Committee staff member, Anna Corning, and explained that Anna would be assisting the Committee with its work along with current staff member, Patrick Hayes. The Chair invited Anna Corning to introduce herself. Anna Corning spoke about her previous work on the Somerville charter review process, working with the Collins Center, and talked about her deep ties to Cambridge.

Chair Born recognized Member Lisa Peterson who made a motion to amend the minutes from the meeting held on September 29, 2022, to remove a sentence on the second page. The motion was seconded by Member Susan Shell.

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

NAME	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT
Kaleb Abebe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mosammat Faria Afreen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kathleen Born (Chairperson)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nikolas Bowie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kevin Chen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max Clermont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jennifer Gilbert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kai Long	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patrick Magee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mina Makarious	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lisa Peterson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ellen Shachter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Susan Shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jim Stockard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VOTE TOTALS	12	0	0	3
	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT

The motion to amend the minutes from the meeting held on September 29, 2022, passed.

Chair Born made a motion to accept the minutes from the meeting held on September 29, 2022, as amended. The motion was seconded by Member Jim Stockard.

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

NAME	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT
Kaleb Abebe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mosammat Faria Afreen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kathleen Born (Chairperson)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nikolas Bowie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Jennifer Gilbert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Susan Shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jim Stockard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VOTE TOTALS	13	0	0	2
	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT

The motion to accept the minutes from the meeting held on September 29, 2022, as amended, passed.

The Chair took the following Communications received from the Committee to be placed on file as follows:

- Communications from Committee Members
 - Communication from Kathy Born to the City Law Department
 - [Communication from Susan Shell to Committee](#)

- Communications from Council Members
 - [Communication from Councillor Burhan Azeem to Committee](#)

Chair Born recognized Member Jim Stockard who made a motion to place the communications received by the Committee on file. The motion was seconded by Member Lisa Peterson.

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

NAME	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT
Kaleb Abebe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mosammat Faria Afreen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kathleen Born (Chairperson)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nikolas Bowie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kevin Chen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max Clermont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jennifer Gilbert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Patrick Magee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mina Makarious	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lisa Peterson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ellen Shachter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Susan Shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jim Stockard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VOTE TOTALS	12	0	0	3
	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT

The motion to place communications received by the Committee on file passed.

The Chair introduced Elizabeth Corbo from the Collins Center to discuss [the memo](#) of the September 9 Charter Review Committee meeting, which detailed discussion questions for this meeting. Ms. Corbo encouraged members to share things that are working well in Cambridge and things that are not working as well, acknowledging that not all issues can be addressed through the Charter, as it is a document dealing primarily with governmental operations. Ms. Corbo explained that these ideas will be incorporated into the Charter later in the process. Ms. Corbo then opened the floor for members to share their thoughts and ideas.

Member Faria Afreen asked questions about the City Manager in relation to the City Council, asking how planning of the annual City budget can be more democratic, funding, and a question about adding ranked choice to the Charter.

Member Kai Long talked about power, and the desire for more diversity as relates to finances required to become a City Councillor. She mentioned the perceived inequity in who has the resources to become a Councillor, the divide in the city between poor and rich (with the rich making decisions that effect the poor), and how to make city government more about the community and less about money.

Member Mina Makarios expressed support for the previous members thoughts and spoke about the need to balance the desire for more participation and democratic action without losing the benefits of having a single unitary government. He expressed concern for what happens in smaller communities when every single decision becomes a political process, particularly the longstanding housing issues becoming even more politicized and hopes to increase accountability and be nimbler.

Member Ellen Shachter stated the need for understood, value-driven guiding principles, regardless of the form of government going forward. She wants the committee to explore the value of a ward system, how to get feedback to the Council regarding departmental needs as relates to the budget, and public participation and stipends for more representative committees.

Member Kevin Chen spoke about examining some of the structural issues in the City Manager role, structure of the Council (and potential changes to consider) and injecting values into the Charter (preamble, equity lens provision).

Member Susan Shell shared concerns regarding clarity on what the committee is tasked with, stating that changes made now must work for future demographics in the city. She stated that there appears to be a lack of deliberation with a process where opinions can be expressed and there can be productive conversation and a genuine, deliberative public process.

Member Jennifer Gilbert spoke about how to encourage participation, what can lead to increased voting, and how the current form of government works in the context of increased need for regional thinking on issues including housing and climate. She spoke about the need for a system that clarifies accountability and decision-making and makes participation more approachable. She also asked if there is data comparing costs to run in other cities using some of the proposed methods.

Member Lisa Peterson shared appreciation for the idea of looking at the Charter with an equity lens, how the City Manager and Council can work together more effectively, and what some barriers to that might be. She called out the 2-year election cycle as one of the barriers to this efficiency, with a preference for a 4-year term, to give greater opportunity for the Council to be a team, and act as a body. She also spoke about the need for the Council to set or reaffirm goals at the start of each term for greater clarity.

Member Patrick Magee agreed with the members before him, adding his hope that the Collins Center will return with information regarding all that has been suggested regarding pros and cons. He said that for him, the challenges in Cambridge come down to transparency in the decisions from the City Manager, how they align with what the Council is asking for, and the impact of strong financial management. He

cited the example of the Somerville public meeting process as joint meetings of Council and City staff to increase transparency.

Member Jim Stockard wants to understand the technological advances/increase in technological capacity going forward, and the ability to share information as relates to facilitating productive dialogue. He shared ideas around adjusting terms and election cycles, and asked if there are ways the budget could be used to embrace ideas such as reparations, or other powers that could be enabled to better serve the community (asking what is capable through the charter).

Member Nikolas Bowie spoke on the importance of enacting legislation that is important to the people of Cambridge (demand more local autonomy), increased fiscal autonomy, and more democratic decision-making within the city. He talked about the structures lending primarily to those with time, money, and resources and how to enfranchise the disenfranchised (including those who work here, can't afford to live here, etc.).

Member Jessica Acevedo talked about a strength-based approach, and her hopes for some type of action. She said she sees the working-class being pushed out of Cambridge, the direct correlation to the affordable housing crisis here and comparing national poverty line, and the threshold affordable housing eligibility here in Cambridge. She also spoke about the other supports needed by citizens (education, family supports), equitable compensation/support for people's time to participate in these conversations and comparing Cambridge to communities farther from home (higher numbers of black and brown citizens).

Member Ellen Schachter added that there needs to be support in taking some risks, and ways to challenge the systems within the city that tend toward the status quo and not think out of the box.

Member Kai Long stated the perception of Cambridge and progressiveness, but how the city works does not reflect that. She said that in thinking about the Charter, the progressiveness needs to be reflected.

Member Susan Shell compared the Charter to being like a Constitution and wondered if it's the place for asserting progressiveness (as related to the purpose of the Charter). She asked that the Committee think more broadly about the common ground and not get too carried away with progressive as a label.

Member Mina Makarios asked whether the Collins Center and the City Solicitor could research items stuck in legislature such as non-citizen voting, rent control, and holding remote public meetings.

Member Faria Afreen added the need to have more information on what is possible considering legislature constraints and interest in term limits.

Member Jim Stockard followed Member Shell's statements regarding progressiveness as part of a preamble stating things the city strives for, including aspirational values.

Chair Born expressed her appreciation for the preceding discussion and spoke about elections and how the cycles can hamper collaboration. She expressed concerns about proportional representation, and the perceived impasses between the Council and the Manager (and clarity on how it works) and her preference for stability over the ups and downs of different personalities. She reminded everyone of recent successes in Cambridge, such as the city support for small businesses during COVID, including minority and women-run

businesses and the key role of the City Manager in those decisions. She concluded with thoughts about who can run for Council and how money factors into who can do so.

Ms. Corbo thanked the Committee for their thoughts and expertise, appreciating many of the common themes. She stated that at the next meeting she will walk the group through the questions and deliberations the group can undertake to incorporate the ideas shared.

The Chair announced that the Committee will appoint a 7-member planning subcommittee as well as volunteers who will work on later drafting and writing (not a subcommittee).

Member Patrick Magee asked if there should be a Vice Chair elected to help share the work.

Elliot Veloso (City Solicitors Office) said the Law Department could look into appointing of a Vice Chair, and suggested that the vote be taken to show that it is the will of the Committee to form a subcommittee and state its purpose of assisting with planning agendas.

Chair Born recognized Member Ellen Schachter who made a motion to form a planning subcommittee. The motion was seconded by Member Jessica Acevedo.

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

NAME	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT
Kaleb Abebe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mosammat Faria Afreen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kathleen Born (Chairperson)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nikolas Bowie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kevin Chen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max Clermont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jennifer Gilbert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Patrick Magee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mina Makarious	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lisa Peterson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ellen Shachter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Susan Shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jim Stockard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VOTE TOTALS	12	0	1	2
	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT

The motion to form a planning subcommittee passed.

The Chair opened the floor to hear from members of the public (Public Comment)

Lee Farris thanked members for the meeting and asked if there is a way to require the Manager and Council to agree on goals and metrics. She also asked to see goals between the Manager and Council prioritized in relationship to each other. She asked if there could be an email list where people could receive notes, agendas, and materials to build participation.

Jameson Quinn stated their interest and expertise in voting systems and reminded the Committee that Cambridge already has ranked-choice voting and some pros and cons of this. They hope to assist in refining the voting systems/process to set it as a model.

John Hawkinson spoke about progressive values in the Charter being blocked by statutory or other constraints and that the Committee look carefully at how to remove some of these roadblocks. He said he would like to see the Committee take up a published calendar of milestones so members of the public can get a sense of deadlines.

The Chair committed to having a robust notification list and asked that members use their networks to advertise the meetings. She also stated that there will be some updates to the Charter review website to make further improvements.

Member Kai Long added a comment that comparing the Charter to the Constitution is upsetting as the history of misrepresentation is known, and hopes the Committee will think about what is good for all, regardless of the label of "progressive".

Member Faria Afreen asked for clarification on the purpose of the planning subcommittee. Anna Corning explained the process used by the Somerville Charter Committee, using the subcommittees to breakdown the larger decisions of the Committee. Chair Born explained that the subcommittee would discuss sequencing aspects of the charter reform.

Chair Born listed those who had expressed interest in volunteering for the planning subcommittee including Kaleb Abebe, Jennifer Gilbert, Kai Long, Susan Shell, Jessica Acevedo, Jim Stockard and Lisa Peterson. She also stated that Mina Makarious, Faria Afreen, and Ellen Shachter had volunteered to assist with writing and drafting.

Ms. Corbo further summarized next steps for the next meetings including walking through the Charter to see where the ideas shared could be reflected in a modern Charter. Member Patrick Magee restated the ask for more information regarding pros and cons/background reading that could be shared to the Committee. The Chair said that she had been asked about compiling a list of resources for background reading.

Chair Born recognized Member Jim Stockard who made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Member Faria Afreen.

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

NAME	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT
Kaleb Abebe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mosammat Faria Afreen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kathleen Born (Chairperson)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nikolas Bowie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kevin Chen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Max Clermont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jennifer Gilbert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kai Long	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patrick Magee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mina Makarious	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lisa Peterson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ellen Shachter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Susan Shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jim Stockard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VOTE TOTALS	13	0	0	2
	YES	NO	PRESENT	ABSENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm with 13 members voting yes, and 2 recorded as absent.



EDWARD J. COLLINS, JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
JOHN W. McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES
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Memorandum

TO: Cambridge Charter Review Committee
FROM: The Collins Center Charter Project Team
DATE: November 2, 2022
RE: Follow-up from October 25, 2022, Charter Review Committee meeting

Overview

From the Committee's discussions at its October 25, 2022, meeting, it was clear that members are excited to move forward with the substantive work of the charter review. This memo will attempt to help the Committee move toward those substantive discussions.

Proposed Review Process

At the most general level, there are two different approaches the Committee could take: (1) reviewing the current charter by going through each section of the current charter text, or (2) discussing key concepts and then looking at how they could be addressed in the current charter text or a more modern type of charter. The Center project team recommends the latter approach for this Committee.

The Center project team recommends structuring the project around key concepts because there appears to be an interest in discussing big-picture issues during this review. Given the interest in broad issues, reviewing the Charter language line by line will not provide an adequate method for discussion.

With this approach of identifying and discussing key concepts, it will be important to begin with the most substantial changes under consideration. While it is challenging to start with the most difficult and comprehensive topics, it would not make sense to consider minor policy changes that may be affected or undone by these larger decisions.

Applying this approach to the Committee, the first consideration of the committee could be to establish a value statement to guide deliberations and recommendations. Afterwards, the Committee can consider whether to rework the current Plan E charter or adopt a new charter format. Next, the Committee may wish to consider whether the current Council-Manager form of government is the best choice for the City now and in the foreseeable future. This decision impacts most other potential discussions and decisions. This discussion will also help to bring out concerns and issues that will be important in later topics. After this discussion, if the Committee decides that the form of government should be left unchanged, then the Committee can move on to narrower but still significant topics (e.g., at-large vs. district councilors, term lengths, and other considerations regarding Council composition).

Should the Committee decide to propose a new form of government for the City, the Committee would likely use upcoming meetings to decide what that will look like and to develop the case for why a change would be in the best interest of the City.

As the Committee begins to deliberate on what form of government will best serve the City now and into the future, a good place to begin is consideration of the themes that are emerging from the Committee's early conversations and from public comment.

Emerging Themes

The project team has pulled together the following early (and often interconnected) themes that have begun to emerge from the initial questions posed about the City's strengths and the problems that the Committee is looking to solve, and from other discussions and public comments during the first two meetings.

It is important to note that this is *not* intended to be an exhaustive list -- just a starting point. It is certain that other important themes will emerge and can be integrated into the discussion as it proceeds. Also, ideas for changes and revisions may touch on several themes. Some emerging themes the project team has heard so far (along with illustrative groupings of Committee suggestions for Charter revisions in no particular order):

1. **Enfranchising/Equity:** There were questions and comments about how to best ensure that as many residents as possible are represented by their local government and that they can be heard by and participate in their local government.
 - **Stipends**
 - **Term limits**
 - **At-large v. District Councilors**
 - **Budget process**
 - **Voting method**
 - **Timing of elections**
 - **Local campaign finance issues**
 - **Incorporating technology into the Charter**
 - **Adjustment of poverty threshold for services (or otherwise compensate for the threshold being low)**
 - **Voter eligibility**

2. **Participation/Accessibility:** There were questions about whether the current form of government ensures that all can access government operations and participate in them.
 - **Stipends**
 - **Communication regarding government services and operations**
 - **Encouraging public deliberation**
 - **Expanding/improving deliberation processes**
 - **Incorporating technology into the Charter**
 - **Voter eligibility**

3. **Effectiveness of Government/Collaboration with other entities:** There were questions and comments about how the Charter can effectuate government working more efficiently and effectively and how government can encourage collaboration within the City and with neighboring municipalities, the state, and beyond.
 - **Measurable goal-setting**
 - **Length of terms**
 - **Election/appointment method of Mayor**
 - **Source of Revenue to decrease dependency on state aid and property taxes**
 - **Strong or weak Mayor elected city-wide vs. Strong or weak City Manager appointed by the Council**
 - **Information sharing between executive and legislative branches**
 - **Removal of antiquated processes**
 - **Allow for more risk-taking and attempts at innovation**
 - **Can the charter increase the autonomy/flexibility of the City government (with regards to the Commonwealth)**
 - **Preservation of what's good/strong/working with current form**
 - **Preservation of City's financial strength**

4. **Responsiveness/accountability/transparency:** There were questions about whether the government is responsive and accountable to the public.
 - **Term length**
 - **At-large vs. District**
 - **Voting method**
 - **Campaign funding**
 - **Number of councilors**
 - **Strong or weak Mayor elected city-wide vs. strong or weak City Manager appointed by the Council**
 - **Lack of clarity about where accountability and decision-making reside**

5. **Legislative functioning/balance of power between legislative and executive branches:** There were questions about whether the legislative branch as currently structured has the capacity to accomplish what it could be accomplishing and whether the legislative/executive balance of power is optimal.
 - **Council/Manager**
 - **Budget Process**
 - **Appointments (Board and Department Heads)**
 - **Strong or weak Mayor elected city-wide vs. Strong or weak City Manager appointed by the Council**
 - **If weak mayor retained, better selection process**
 - **Council term length**

6. **Vision/values/principles:** There was robust discussion regarding values, vision and principles and to what extent those are incorporated into the Charter.
 - **Where do the City's goals and aspirations lie?**
 - **How is goal-setting done?**
 - **Where are the City's values listed?**

When considering these overarching themes, we encourage the Committee to:

- *IDENTIFY* specific issues and concerns that fit within the theme,
- *QUESTION* whether the issues are systematic/long-term or due to a short-term set of circumstances,
- *CONNECT* the proposed change to the end result: If the issues are systematic/long-term, is changing some of the items listed above likely to address those issues?
- *BALANCE* proposed improvements with any new risks/challenges introduced by the change. Does making a change introduce new problems?

The project team recommends that Committee members prepare for upcoming meeting(s) by preparing some comments, examples, and further questions relating to the themes and questions presented here. Additionally, review of the Collins Center's 2021 Memorandum#1 from the 2021 charter project provides a very thorough discussion of issues related to the Cambridge Charter. That memo is linked here for your review: [Cambridge Charter Review Project Memo1 - 03.11.21.pdf](#) During the next meeting we can examine what a typical current charter might look like, including where some provisions identified above may be addressed.

Charter Review Pathways and Limitations

Given the Committee's interest in considering recommendations for significant change, it is important to understand the limitations of the Committee's role and the Council's options when deciding how to best act upon the Committee's report and recommendations.

As stated in the Mayor's summary to City Council dated July 27, 2022:

"Per the passage of the ballot initiatives in November 2021, the Committee will review the current Plan E Charter, hold community forums, and gather input from all stakeholders and residents. The Committee will recommend changes they believe will improve and modernize Cambridge's structure and governance to the City Council. Any recommendations the City Council accepts will be put before voters in a municipal election prior to adoption. The Committee is expected to take up to one year to complete its work with the first meeting scheduled for August 16 at 5pm."

And as further provided in the current Cambridge charter:

"The special committee shall file a report with the City Council within 1 year of its appointment recommending any changes to the city charter which it deems necessary or desirable, unless an extension is authorized by vote of the City Council. Action on any proposed charter changes shall be as authorized by the Massachusetts constitution or general laws."

In summarizing the two items above, the Committee shall:

- Review the current Plan E Charter;
- Hold community forums, gather input for all stakeholders and residents;
- Recommend changes to the City's governance and operations that the Committee feels are necessary or desirable and will "improve and modernize" the City's structure and governance;
- These changes shall be presented in a report filed with the City Council within 1 year of the Committee's appointment

Upon the filing of this report with the Council, the Committee's mandate and role is fulfilled. After the report is submitted, the Council determines how to respond to the Committee's recommendations.

Once the Council has accepted the Committee's report, there are two paths forward should the Council decide to proceed with Charter revision. The Council may use MGL Chapter 43B, Section 10A to bring certain amendments to the voters. A two-thirds vote of the Council is required to put the amendments on a municipal ballot. Voters approve such amendments by majority vote. This route can be used for "housekeeping" or technical amendments to a charter.

If the Committee recommends a substantive change (e.g., change manager to mayor, change council term, change composition of the council, etc.), the Council may file a "home rule petition" as allowed by Section 8 of the Home Rule Amendment. This "special act" route has been used by municipalities to change from home rule charters to special act charters in various cities, including Agawam (change manager to mayor) and Franklin (change council composition).

Regardless of the path the Council ultimately follows, before this Committee now is the important work of determining priorities and developing recommendations that will shape the City's government for years to follow.



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Memorandum

TO: Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui, Cambridge City Council, City of Cambridge
Members of the Cambridge City Council, City of Cambridge
CC: Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, City of Cambridge
FROM: Charter Project Team, Collins Center for Public Management
DATE: March 11, 2021
RE: First Memo on Cambridge Charter and Charter Review

Project Background

On September 23, 2020, at the request of the City Council, the Collins Center charter project team presented at a special Council meeting on charters and charter processes. Cambridge is one of only a dozen Massachusetts municipalities to still retain a “Plan” form of government, and one of only two remaining cities with a Plan E. The City has had this Plan E charter since it was adopted in 1940, and, to the Center project team’s knowledge, it has never been the subject of a formal review. Best practices suggest that a charter should be reviewed at least once every ten years.

Following the Center’s presentation, the Council has requested further information about what different charters and forms of government could look like in Cambridge and what charter review pathways might make the most sense. The Center responded with a proposal that included two memos:

1. A memo presenting major options of form of government available to Cambridge and the key differences between them;
2. A memo summarizing the Cambridge City Council’s feedback regarding the current charter and form of government, and providing options for pathways the Council could take

The proposal also included a presentation of the memos to the City Council, if the Council requests one.

After receipt of the proposal, the City Council unanimously passed Policy Order O-5 of November 23, 2020, which stated “That the City Manager be and is hereby requested to appropriate the funds necessary to procure the work of the Collins Center as outlined in their submitted proposal.” Upon signing of an intergovernmental services agreement, the Center commenced work on this memo, which is the Memo #1 for this project referenced above.

In this Memo

This memo includes:

1. Background on Charters and Forms of Government in Massachusetts
2. History of Cambridge Charter and Form of Government
3. Brief Review of Current Cambridge Charter and Form of Government
4. Potential Changes to Cambridge Charter and Available Options
5. Project Next steps

Background on Charters and Forms of Government in Massachusetts

“A charter is the foundation of a local government and functions as the municipal equivalent of a state or federal constitution, setting forth guiding principles for governance. Composed by citizens, a charter specifies the most fundamental relationships between a government and its community. It establishes the framework for how a local government operates in terms of its structure, responsibilities, functions, and processes. The way public officials are elected, the form of government, and the role citizens play in local government are just a few examples of the important choices articulated in a charter.”

-Guide for Charter Commissions, National Civic League, p. 5

As noted in the quote, the charter is the foundation of modern local government. In colonial times and in the initial years after the establishment of the Commonwealth, a “charter” referred to the state’s recognition and incorporation of a certain area of land as a “town.” State law dictated the duties of town officers and the conduct of town meeting. If a town wanted to change some aspect of the state’s requirements or to change to a city form of government (as began to occur in the early nineteenth century), it sought the permission of the state to make such changes via an act of the legislature. The passage of the Home Rule Amendment to the state’s constitution in 1966 changed the premise of a charter as defining the form of government and how it is to be structured.

From the first settlements of the Massachusetts Bay Colony through the beginning of the nineteenth century, all Massachusetts communities operated with is now called a town form of government. This consisted of a board of selectmen, an open town meeting, and numerous elected boards, committees, and positions.

In the early 1800s, Boston began to bring its concerns about the selectmen-town meeting form of government to the state legislature. Approaching 40,000 population, the residents of Boston found town meeting too unwieldy and asked the legislature to provide a city form of government. In response, in 1821, the Massachusetts Constitution was amended to allow towns over 12,000 population the ability to adopt a city form of government. Among the drawbacks of the amendment were:

- The term “City” was not defined;
- There was no statute to define how the amendment was to be implemented; and
- The Commonwealth did not provide model charters or general guidance for this process.

As a result of these omissions, throughout the nineteenth century, the only avenue available was for towns to petition the state legislature for a special act to establish a city form of government.

Boston’s first city government, enacted in 1822, provided for a “board of aldermen” serving as the legislative body. This Board consisted of 40 members and a mayor, all elected for one-year terms.

The city governments proposed in Massachusetts in the 19th century were all mayor-council. The majority had bicameral legislatures – a common council, elected by wards, and smaller board of aldermen, usually elected at large. This essentially mirrored the state’s own organization at the time:

- State: House of Representatives – State Senate – Governor
- City: Common Council – Board of Aldermen – Mayor

As the state legislature sought to keep the Governor somewhat constrained, so too city charters during that period mostly constrained the authority of the mayor, even to the point of assigning to the council some executive duties.

Advocates for cities began to receive a bit more support when the state legislature began to be elected by districts in 1858. Previously, each city and town had only one representative to the house of representatives, and senators represented some number of adjoining municipalities.

In 1915, the state legislature finally codified state law relating to the establishment and operation of city governments. Several factors influenced this step, including growth in metropolitan Boston (which contained a cluster of cities established in the 1800s, which had expanding populations) and the “progressive movement.”

At the local level, one piece of the “progressive movement” prominently featured was the council-manager form of government, which was viewed as an antidote to the “corruption” of large cities (Chicago being the most frequently used example), where ward councilors sought projects and other advantages for their wards, with little consideration of the city’s needs as a whole.

This progressive era cause energized good government advocates and led to the formation of the National Municipal League in 1894, which served as both a research and promotional arm for the city manager movement. This government form provided for all councilors to be elected at large, and a manager appointed by the council who was in charge of the operations of the city. The structure was deemed to be more efficient, to remove the temptation of favoring certain wards over others, to discourage “politics” in city decision-making, and to “run the city like a business”, in the words of the frequently-touted maxim. Its roots were primarily mid-western, where it remains a popular form, but it reached all areas of the country, especially as people became more mobile following WWII, and the country’s population increased.

The Massachusetts state government was likely not wholly sold on this approach as it radically departed from the state’s traditions and history, including distrust of forms of government that were less connected to the populace, significant state oversight of local functions, and continuing discomfort with a single chief executive with “too much power”, regardless of whether the position was a mayor or manager.

Nonetheless, there was enough momentum to provide a statute offering “plans of city government” in 1915. This became Chapter 43 of the General Laws. Chapter 43 had three distinct aims:

1. Provide a citizen petition process to adopt a city form of government;
2. Define the state’s requirements for city government; and
3. Provide several model plans for city government.

The statute initially provided four plans, which are summarized as follows:

- Plan A: “Strong mayor”; 2-year term
 - Council of 9 members elected at large for a 2-year term
 - School Committee elected at large (Mayor serves as chair), members served 4 years
 - Mayor made most appointments without council confirmation
- Plan B: “Weak mayor”; 2-year term
 - Council composed of ward and at large members; majority of members from wards, 2-year term
 - School committee elected at large (mayor on school committee) 2-year term

- Most mayoral appointments required council confirmation
- Plan C: Commission
 - An elected City Council (also referenced in the statute as Commissioners) of 5 members, with one serving as Mayor, are elected to serve as both the legislative and executive.
 - The Mayor had responsibility for the city's administrative and financial functions, while the other aldermen served as department heads.
- Plan D: Council – Manager
 - Council elected at large 2-year term (number of wards determines number of councilors)
 - School committee elected 4-year term
 - Council elects “Mayor” from among its membership
 - Council appoints manager
 - Manager responsible for the operations of all city departments, boards, offices, and commissions
 - 2/3 council vote required to remove the manager

Several decades later, two additional plans were added to Chapter 43. Plan E in 1938 and Plan F in 1959.

- Plan E:
 - Similar to Plan D except that it provides for:
 - Proportional representation
 - 2-year term for school committee
- Plan F:
 - Mayor and council elected for 2 year terms
 - Council size dependent upon number of wards; range from 7 to 15 members; majority of members are always from wards
 - Mayor makes all appointments and removals without council confirmation
 - Provides for a “partisan” city government, with candidates identified by party designation.

Twelve cities operate under on these plans today, in most cases in modified form:

- Operating under Plan A: Haverhill, North Adams, Quincy, Springfield
- Operating under Plan B: Brockton, Fitchburg, Marlborough, New Bedford, Revere, Salem
- Operating under Plan E: Cambridge, Lowell

No cities ever adopted Plans C, D, or F. Lawrence had a commission form of government created by special act that was similar to Plan C, but it was replaced in 1983 by adoption of a mayor-council government. Worcester adopted a home rule charter in 1985, but retained many of features of the city's prior Plan E government.

The statutory text devoted to each Plan is modest, because it was anticipated that cities would adopt ordinances to further define the functions and responsibilities of the city's government.

In general, the Plan forms provided did not enjoy significant popularity. Most cities seeking to revise existing charters, or towns seeking to become cities, continued to petition the state legislature for a special act. A majority of Massachusetts cities today are governed by special acts of the legislature.

Probably no city is operating today under a Plan as exactly defined in Chapter 43 (although Cambridge stands out for the small number of changes made to Plan E provisions). For example, Lowell adopted Plan

E but used the special act process to elect its councilors without proportional representation; Quincy modified Plan A by special act to provide for a council composed of both at large and district members; Springfield changed its council composition by special act following a suit brought against the city finding the city in violation of the federal Voting Rights Act; and Quincy, Revere, and Salem all used an optional provision of Chapter 43 to increase the mayoral term to 4 years.

A few cities have adopted special acts changing the form of government after operating under a plan. For example, Medford operated under Plan E until adoption of a mayor-council special charter in 1988, and Gloucester operated under Plan E until adoption of a home rule charter in 1974. Additionally, a few cities adopted more than one Plan. For example, Revere adopted Plan B in 1965 after operating under Plan E.

In 1962, then-Governor Peabody proposed a Home Rule Amendment to the state's constitution. After some modification of the text, and a citizen petition process demonstrating support for the concept, the Home Rule Amendment to the state's constitution was adopted in 1966. The amendment provided a wholly local process for charter adoption and specifically defined the state's role in relation to municipalities. This was a significant departure from the long-established state role in local government.

Following the amendment's adoption, the process for adopting a Plan government was repealed, meaning that it has not been legally possible for a municipality to adopt a Plan form of government like Cambridge's since 1966. (Municipalities can write their own charters to include some Plan features, and several have, but with the passage of the Home Rule Amendment in 1966, state law repealed the process provided for adopting new Plan governments.)

The Massachusetts amendment provides what is referred to as "limited home rule." That is, the state retains its authority to act within specific spheres of the law (e.g., the conduct of all elections) and its authority to enact uniform state laws (applying to all cities, all towns, all cities and towns, or a class of not less than 2,) as well as laws of "compelling state interest" (laws can be both uniform and of compelling state interest, but not always). The reference to "class" may have anticipated that Massachusetts would adopt classification of municipalities (often by population), but that has not happened to date.

The Home Rule Amendment serves several purposes:

- Provides a local process for the adoption of a charter;
- Identifies those spheres of law solely within the jurisdiction of the state;
- Identifies how the state may act in relation to cities and towns; and
- Reaffirms the right of cities and towns to petition the state legislature.

For the purposes of the charter discussion, this last bullet means that adopting a charter under the Home Rule Amendment is not mandatory; it is optional, and municipalities still retain the right to petition the legislature for approval of a locally-written charter.

The Home Rule Amendment lays out the procedures for a city or town to adopt a charter. The highlights of this process are:

1. Citizen petition process requiring 15% of voters to sign a petition calling for the municipality to adopt a charter;
2. Election of a 9-member charter commission to prepare a proposed charter;
3. Completion and distribution of a draft charter within 16 months of election of the commission;
4. Review of the draft charter by the Attorney General to determine consistency with the constitution and laws of the commonwealth;

5. Preparation of a proposed charter (also referenced as the final report) within 18 months of the election of the commission;
6. Distribution of the proposed charter to every household with a registered voter 2 weeks prior to the municipal election;
7. Voters adopt or reject the charter in its entirety; and
8. Charter takes effect as the charter provides.

The 55-year history of charter activity under the amendment lands at about a 50% acceptance rate overall, although there have been periods when it that rate has been slightly higher and others when it has been lower. There are currently 86 cities and towns operating under home rule charters (i.e., charters adopted using the procedures of the Home Rule Amendment).

The process is considered burdensome and/or risky by some due to:

- The high petition signature requirement;
- Who gets elected to the charter commission is unpredictable (which could lead to those who only seek to protect the “status quo” being elected or only those who are interested in proposing a totally new form of government voters would likely reject or an irreconcilable combination of two opposing views); and
- What some perceive as a “lack of clarity” by the state.

This lack of clarity is due to incomplete follow-up after the passage of the Home Rule Amendment. Once it was adopted, the legislature immediately formed a Special Commission for the Implementation of Home Rule. Two major recommendations came from the Commission:

- Enact an implementing statute for the amendment; and
- Undertake an examination and recodification of state laws affecting cities and towns to bring them into harmony with the amendment.

The legislature quickly acted on the first recommendation, enacting Chapter 43B, the Home Rule Procedures Act, in 1967. But no action was ever taken on the second recommendation, leaving some murky areas for charter commissions to face regarding what is a “uniform state law” or a “state law of compelling interest” – most of these can be worked around, but there is still discomfort in some quarters. Regarding the judicial history of the amendment, there have been relatively few cases on the Amendment, the Procedures Act, or individual charter provisions. In general, the state courts have looked favorably on the amendment and its purpose.

On balance, it is clear that the amendment has not proved to be particularly popular or that it has had a significant catalytic effect in changing the fundamentals of Massachusetts local government. While more towns have become cities using this process, the vast majority of towns still operate under the laws of the commonwealth with only occasional special acts making specific and discrete changes. Also, the roughly 50% success rate can be seen by some a deterrent, given the investment of time and effort in this endeavor.

Cities for the most part still prefer to petition the legislature to revise their existing charters or make specific changes to existing charters. In addition to being reluctant to use the Home Rule Charter route, given the strictures of the Home Rule Amendment noted previously, the special act route remains popular for several additional reasons:

- It is usually faster, without the specific timelines of the home rule amendment;

- A city or town can determine a process and timeline that is responsive to the community; and
- The question of “who get elected to the charter commission?” is not an issue as a mayor or council (or board of selectmen) can appoint an advisory committee to make recommendations.

The process for enacting a special act charter is more or less as follows (please see Appendix G for “Charting a Route for Charter Change” article):

1. The city council votes to send a special act charter (prepared by the council, or by a committee established by the council), to the legislature;
2. Upon passage by the council, the proposed special act is given to the city’s legislative delegation for filing with the state legislature;
3. A hearing is held by the Joint Committee on Municipal and Regional Government (the committee may refer portions of the bill with other committees [e.g., provisions relating to elections may be sent to the Elections Committee for review]). The council usually provides both written and in person testimony at the hearing;
4. The Municipal and Regional Government Committee will make a recommendation on the bill to send to the full legislature for a vote;
5. Once enacted by the House and Senate, it is sent to the governor for signing; and
6. Once signed by the Governor, it will take effect in the city as the act provides. It is common for the voters to approve a new charter or any major charter changes (e.g., change council composition, change from manager to elected mayor) by ballot vote.

Regardless of the method used, charter activity has ebbed and flowed over the decades, and it is dependent to a great degree on community conditions. For example, passage of Proposition 2 ½ in 1980 led many towns to begin to centralize their town governments through charter adoption to achieve greater efficiencies and strengthen financial practices. Other cities and towns may have considered increasing population, new responsibilities imposed on local government by both federal and state actions, and decreasing town meeting participation as factors influencing the need for change. The decade of the 1980s was the most active in the charter arena, given the factors noted here. In recent years, there has been modest activity in both the election of charter commissions to prepare charters, and the enactment of charters via special legislation. Charter amendments follow a similar pattern, as local conditions will be the main factor in determining the need for them.

History of Cambridge Charter and Form of Government

The first reference passing reference to Cambridge (or Newe Towne, as mentioned) in the colonial records is dated July 26, 1631. A year and a half later, on December 24, 1632, an early form of town meeting begins to take some formal shape with a signed agreement that there would be a monthly meeting of all of the people included in the agreement, and that all would be required to attend or face fines. (The name Cambridge does not appear in official colonial records until September 8, 1636, and the town was not formally renamed until May 2, 1638.)

For roughly 215 years, Cambridge remained a town with a board of selectmen and town meeting. Cambridge adopted a city form of government in 1846 by a special act of the legislature (St. 1846, Chapter 109). (See Appendix A for actual text.) This charter provided for:

- Mayor
- Common Council of 21 members elected by ward
- Board of Aldermen of 6 members elected at large

- School committee of 7 members elected by ward

In 1891, Cambridge adopted a new charter by a special act (St. 1891, Chapter 364). (See Appendix B for actual text.) This charter provided for:

- A common council of 20 members, a board of aldermen of 11 members, and a mayor, all elected for 1 year terms
- A school committee of 5 (1 elected from each of the city's wards); mayor serves as chair *ex officio*; term of school committee members was 3 years
- Majority vote of the board of aldermen required for removal of certain mayoral appointments

In 1911, a special act providing a commission form of government was rejected by the voters.

In 1915, the City adopted a Plan B mayor-council government, which provided for the election of:

- Mayor
- City Council of 15 members (11 by ward, 4 at large)
- School Committee of 7 members
- Elections were held annually until the city adopted the now more common schedule effective in 1921, electing officials for 2 year terms

In 1938, 50 professors, industrialists, merchants, legionnaires, white collar workers, and laborers organized a campaign to adopt a Plan E form of government to replace the mayor/council form. After contentious legal and political wrangling, the question to adopt Plan E was placed on the ballot, but it failed. In 1940, the question to adopt Plan E was again placed on the ballot, and it was adopted. (There is a lengthy article in Collier's magazine that contains significant detail about these efforts. See Appendix C for article.)

In the 80 years since adoption of this Plan E form of government, the project team found only one special act making slight modification to Plan E requirements. Chapter 701 of the Acts of 1987 allows the city manager to appoint as chair of the board of assessors a director of assessment administration. (The director also supervises the other 2 assessors.) Beyond that, the project team found three instances of modest additional structural change made via special acts:

1. The City sought state authorization to adopt a Fair Housing Ordinance -Chapter 413 of 1991, and to establish a Housing Trust Fund with a board of trustees appointed by the manager (and the manager serving *ex officio*).
2. The City used the special act process to establish a Department of Traffic and Parking and accompanying Commission for same -- Chapter 435 of the Acts of 1961.
3. A Public Health Commission was established by special act in 1996 (c.147), creating the "Cambridge Health Network" and providing for the administration/operation of Somerville Hospital. (This is specific to the set of circumstances in the health care market at that time with only modest tie-in to the more familiar public health activities we associate with municipalities.)

In terms of the executive branch, the City has had nine city managers since the adoption of Plan E. In recent decades, the City has had two managers with long tenures: one who served from 1968 to 1970 and again from 1974 to 1981 (8 years), and another who served from 1981 to 2013 (32 years). Since 2013, Cambridge has had two additional managers. Both of these were internal candidates (chosen by the Council after search processes), meaning that since 1981 there has been continual internal succession of city managers.

Brief Review of Current Cambridge Charter and Form of Government

As noted, Cambridge is one of only two Plan E forms of government operating in Massachusetts. (Lowell is the other.) This section provides a brief overview of the major features of Cambridge's Plan E government.

The Plan forms of government are all found in Chapter 43 of the Massachusetts General Laws, which contains both: (a) generic provisions applicable to all city governments operating under Plans (with some exceptions for Plans D, E, and F), which are sections 17 through 45, and (b) provisions specific to the operation of each Plan. For Plan E, the relevant sections are 93 through 116.

The discussion below addresses both the generic and specific provisions of Chapter 43. It is important to remember that state law was highly directive and specific, keeping local discretion as to procedures and requirements quite limited.

Provisions Relating to the Council:

In Plan E, the city council elects a mayor and vice chairman from among its membership, although this position is typically thought of as a "weak mayor" position and is more akin to a council president.

The primary powers and duties of the city council include:

- Appoint city manager;
- Adoption of ordinances and other measures;
- Establish and amend council rules;
- Adoption of the budget (as provided by MGL Chapter 44, which applies all city councils in Massachusetts);
- Appoint city clerk for a 3-year term; and
- Appoint city auditor for a 3-year term.

To accomplish its duties, Chapter 43 provides details on council procedures, including providing:

- that the council may request that the manager (or other subordinate representing the manager) attend council meetings to address specific issues. The council must provide one week notice to the manager;
- for regular meetings of the city council, as well as the calling of special meetings. Meetings to be open, and council rules must provide that "citizens and employees shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any such meeting in regard to any matter considered thereat." (Section 98);
- procedures for amendment and repeal of ordinances, including specific conditions for the passage of emergency ordinances, and passage of ordinances in one council meeting. Majority vote required for passage of ordinances;
- appointment of manager by council; manager serves at pleasure of council; council sets salary for manager. (Note: The manager may have employment contract as authorized by MGL, Chapter 41, Section 108N.); and

- for council to set its own salary and the salary for manager. If a city employee is serving on the council, such individual receives the employee salary in lieu of the councilor salary, but not both.

Provisions Relating to the Mayor:

Plan E provides that the mayor is recognized as head of government for:

- Ceremonial purposes;
- By the courts for service of civil process;
- By the governor for military and emergency purposes (Note: Powers to direct the militia pursuant to MGL, c. 33 were repealed by St. 2014, c. 307); and
- In time of public danger or emergency, and with the consent of the council, may “take command of the police, maintain order and enforce laws.”

Provisions Relating to the Manager:

According to the plan text, the primary powers and duties of the manager include:

- Administration of affairs of the city;
- Execute ordinances, rules and regulations;
- Make recommendations to council on matters as manager deems “desirable”;
- Periodically report to council on city affairs;
- Keep council advised of city’s financial condition and future needs;
- Prepare and submit budget to council; and
- Make all appointments and removals; report to council on all appointments and removals.

Other provisions relevant to the manager’s role include:

- The manager may delegate appointment and removal authority to department heads; and
- The manager (or a designated subordinate) may attend any council meeting and address the council on any subject.
- 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. (Violations of s. 107 of MGL, c. 43 punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both. Also subject to removal from office and loss of eligibility to “ever again” seek any elective city office.)

Provisions Relating to the School Committee:

Plan E provides the following provisions related to the school committee:

- Election of a school committee;
- Organization of a school committee;
- Duties of a school committee (since superseded by St. 1993, c. 71 – “Education Reform Act”);
- Requirements for the location and building of schools (in Plan E cities, approval of both school committee and city manager are required); and
- Filling of vacancies on the school committee.

Provisions Relating to Procedures and Other Requirements:

Plan E provides the following provisions related to procedures and other requirements:

- Procedures for administering oath of office to elected officers;

- Requirement for newspaper publication of ordinances;
- Interest in city contracts prohibited;
- Filling of vacancies in elective offices;
- Penalties for solicitation of campaign contributions from city employees;
- Date of municipal election;
- Implementation of proportional representation – nomination papers; form and contents of ballot, directions to voters, counting of ballots; and
- No increase or reduction in salary can take effect in the year in which it is adopted, and no change in salary may be enacted between the time of an election of a new council and the taking of office of a new council.

Comparison of Plan E to Typical/Generic Recent Massachusetts Municipal Charters

Typical Massachusetts municipal charters written in the last 30 years contain nine or ten articles, often in the same order. The charter below provides a comparison of what is included in each common article of modern charters with what Plan E includes to address the topic.

Typical Article	Content of Typical Charter Article	How Plan E Addresses The Topic
Incorporation, etc.	Affirms the status of municipalities and their authority under state law; identifies the form of government	Implied, as Plan E authorized by state law
Legislative	Composition, term, powers and duties of the council	Plan E contains all of these features, term, powers and duties of the council
Executive	Identifies mayor or manager as chief executive; defines authority and responsibilities	Plan E identifies the city manager as having authority/responsibility for all city functions
School Committee/Other Elected Officials	Composition, term, powers and duties of the school committee	Plan E contains all of these features
Organization	Provides for adoption of ordinances or administrative code defining departments, boards, offices, etc. Allows for combining, dissolving, or similar organizational changes	Not addressed in the Plan governments
Finance	Describes budget process and timelines, capital plan requirements, preparation of financial forecasts, approval of budget transfers. Some recent charters include process for setting yearly budget policy, preparing financial forecast	Plan E: the roles of the city manager and council in the process are defined; contains none of the features of more recent charters
Elections	Describes process for preliminary and general elections, including signature collection requirements, timeline, ballot position	With the exception of the explanation of proportional representation, the Plans do not focus to a great degree on election procedures as most are governed by state law; Plan

Typical Article	Content of Typical Charter Article	How Plan E Addresses The Topic
		governments could provide for preliminary elections
Citizen Relief	Procedures for free petition, initiative, referendum, and recall. Timeline, signature collection, action by council, timeline for election. Many also include a voter threshold requirement for the results of these elections to be valid	Plan E contains procedures for initiative and referendum. Note that the state's election laws were recodified in the 1970s, and state law relative to petition requirements were changed in the 1980s. Cambridge provisions should be updated to provide greater clarity and assure adherence to state requirements
General Provisions	Contains provisions relating to requirements and procedures of wide applicability across the city government (e.g., procedures for multi-member bodies, amending the charter, periodic charter and ordinance review)	Plan E contains certain of these provisions, but lacks most of the provisions noted
Transition Provisions	Most important when changing the form of government, but also of value to assure that adjustments made to timelines and procedures that may be affected by charter adoption or revision	MGL, Chapter 43 provided transitional guidance for those communities adopting one of the Plans. This is particularly important when changing the form of government

As the chart above demonstrates, there are significant differences between Plan E (and, in fact, the Plan forms of government generally) and charters written in the last 30 years. In particular, Plan lacks quite a few provisions now standard in Massachusetts city charters. These include:

- Few references to public participation in government other than voting;
- No explicit reference to council oversight of the manager (e.g., yearly evaluation);
- No authority to organize/reorganize departments;
- No substantive description of financial practices;
- No council role in confirming manager appointments; and
- No requirement for periodic review of the charter.

Given that Plan E was adopted by Cambridge in 1940, when state law addressing the responsibilities of cities and towns was highly prescriptive (and intended to constrain local action within the parameters of state law), and when the only avenue for any municipality to change such prescriptions was a special act of the legislature, it is not surprising that Cambridge's charter contains few of the features now associated with charters enacted after the passage of the Home Rule Amendment in 1966.

Comparison of Form of Government to Other Cities in Massachusetts

There are 59 cities in Massachusetts and 292 towns. Fifteen cities have council-manager forms of government and 44 have mayor-council forms. (Please see Appendix D for basic structural information on all Massachusetts 59 cities, and Appendix E for more detailed descriptions of three council-manager forms.)

Of the ten most populous municipalities in Massachusetts (all of which are cities), seven have mayor-council forms of government. As noted previously, Cambridge and Lowell are the two Plan E council-manager forms, and Worcester has a home rule charter that is very similar to Plan E.

One major reason for the popularity of the mayor-council form is historical. In the nineteenth century, as more cities were being incorporated, the only form proposed was mayor-council. The state did not acknowledge other options until the passage of Chapter 43 in 1915. The tradition of voters choosing the executive leadership in Massachusetts cities is thus well established. A further enhancement, begun in Newton in 1970, is the 4-year mayoral term. Its popularity has increased in recent years, and there are now 20 mayors (45% of all Massachusetts mayors) serving 4-year terms. Voters have become comfortable with electing an individual who combines both management and political accountability. There are drawbacks, including: (1) mayors who serve for decades, sometimes without serious opposition, which can influence the “pace of change” in a community, (2) circumstances of rapid turnover where mayors continue to serve 2-year terms, which may lead to frustration and/or missed opportunities for progress, and (3) cases where mayors remained politically popular while providing poor management over municipal operations or finances.

Nonetheless, these possible difficulties aside, several towns in recent years have chosen to adopt a mayor-council form of government as they left behind a town form of government. Examples include Braintree, Framingham, and Weymouth. Other towns choosing to take city forms of government have moved to the council-manager form. Examples include Amherst, East Longmeadow, and North Attleborough.

Looking at council construction, across all Massachusetts cities council size generally ranges between nine and 15. The high outlier is Newton, with 24 councilors and the low outliers are Medford and Palmer, both with 7 members. (Medford elects 7 at-large, Palmer has 4 district and 3 at-large members.)

Beyond Cambridge, there are 12 additional cities with all councilors elected at large. In mayor-council cities, the council is most often composed of at-large and district (ward) members; the majority of such councils have more district members. Again, this reflects long-standing Massachusetts practice, assuring that all areas of the city are represented. It is also noted that a district council race may be less arduous for the candidates in terms of both time and funding for a campaign. In council-manager cities, there is a pretty even split between those that have all at large councilors and those that have a mix of at large and district councilors. (One city, Barnstable, has all district councilors.)

Cambridge remains the only city in Massachusetts using proportional representation, although the relatively new council-manager charter in Amherst has set it on a path toward ranked-choice voting.

Potential Changes to Cambridge Charter and Available Options for Change

Cambridge has been a continuously-operating entity for roughly 390 years. In that time, as far the project team can discern, the municipality has had five distinct forms of government: town (1631-1846), mayor-bicameral council (1846-1891), mayor-council (1891-1915), Plan B mayor-council (1915-1941), and Plan E council-manager (1941-present). The current Plan E charter has been in place virtually unchanged since 1941, with only the minor modification relating to the appointment of the Board of Assessors noted above.

Whether the current charter has been reviewed systemically in the last 80 years is unclear, but the project team understands that there has been no systemic review in the last decade. Although Cambridge's population is only 7% larger in 2020 than it was 1940 when the current charter was enacted, the demographics are significantly different. The city is significantly more racially and ethnically diverse (e.g., the city was 95% white in 1950, and was 67% white in 2010, according to a community profile on the City's website), and it has shifted dramatically away from being primarily families (e.g., 87% of households in 1950 were family households, compared with 40% in 2010). Equally important, the operating environment in which municipal governments function is extremely different, whether in terms of services provided, technology available, state and federal laws, resident expectations, etc. Moreover, if anything, the pace of change is accelerating.

Most Massachusetts municipal charters written in the last 30 years include a mandated periodic review of the charter, usually at 10-year intervals. This is intended to guarantee that the charter is reviewed regularly.

As the Center project team described in its September presentation, there are five very broad and overlapping types of reasons for a charter review:

1. Ensure that the government is keeping up with a modern understanding of best practices;
2. Ensure that the government is responsive to the needs and preferences of the current population;
3. Ensure that the charter is kept consistent with changes in state or federal law;
4. Ensure that the charter is kept consistent with changes in values or cultural changes; and
5. Clarify any text that has caused confusion or dispute over interpretation.

For generic examples of these types of reasons, see Appendix F.

It is important to emphasize two points about reviewing a charter. First, the need to review a charter does not, in and of itself, imply the need to modify a charter. Municipal charter reviews frequently end with no major changes proposed to the charter. This does not mean that these reviews were failures or wasteful. The act of the review itself is valuable in multiple ways, independent of whether major changes are made. For example, minor changes to charter text can improve clarity for local officials and employees, as well as the public, or mitigate the possibility of political or legal disputes due to confusion or differing views on interpretation of charter provisions. Additionally, the project team has seen issues and frustrations surfaced during charter reviews lead to operational changes that do not require charter changes but that would probably not have been addressed without the attention focused on them that the charter review provided.

Second, although it may be self-evident, it is worth emphasizing that even when a charter review leads to significant proposed changes, that is not necessarily an indictment of the existing charter or the current individuals leading and managing the municipal government. Sometimes, changes are needed simply due to changing circumstances, and this desire for changes is not mutually exclusive with recognizing the successes of an existing charter and form of government.

In Cambridge's specific case, some examples of items that could potentially worth considering in a charter review include the following:

1. Is the overall form of government still the optimal one for Cambridge?
2. Does the construction of the council still work for residents and for councilors?
 - a. Is the number of councilors optimal?
 - b. Is there any value in having district representation on the council?

- c. Is the term of office of the council optimal, or should an increase to four years be considered?
- 3. How do the Council’s goals and priorities get integrated and prioritized into the City Manager’s budget?
- 4. Is the current structure responsive to resident needs and priorities?
 - a. Are participation mechanisms and practices effective in gathering resident views?
- 5. Where does the “vision” for the City reside?
 - a. Is there a mechanism for the City to create and maintain a vision?
 - b. Are there mechanisms for linking strategies, goals, and steps to such a vision?
 - c. Are there mechanisms for establishing metrics to monitor those goals and steps, and creating accountable for working toward them?
- 6. Should a regular charter review process be formalized?

Obviously, the most fundamental change that could be considered would be whether the city should move from its council-manager form (with a mayor elected from council) to a mayor-council form of government. (Theoretically, Cambridge could also move back toward a town form of government, but no city in the history of Massachusetts has chosen to return to town form of government, and Cambridge’s population would make it as large as the next two most populous towns (Brookline and Plymouth) combined.)

There are many complicated and intertwined considerations in comparing mayor and manager forms. The project team has created the chart below as a very simplistic starting point for considering the two forms of city government now operating in Massachusetts, and how those structures differ in theory.

Comparison of Generic Mayor and Manager Forms of Government		
Item	Mayor	Manager
Appointment/Election	Elected by voters.	Appointed by Council.
Residency	Must be a resident of the city.	May come from anywhere. Charter may include a residency requirement.
Qualifications	None, but determined by popularity among voters.	The council can look for someone with the specific qualifications the municipality wants at that point. General qualifications may be put into charter.
Accountability	Accountable only to the voters (election or recall).	Accountable to the Council. Council may review performance on a regular basis.
Relationship with Council	Dependent upon the circumstances. Acts independently of council in most cases.	Appointed by and can be dismissed by the Council.
Veto Power	Can typically veto certain Council actions.	Has no veto power.
Term	Unless term-limited, serves in increments of terms until voted out of office or leaves office.	Manager may serve a long tenure or may be terminated by the Council at

Comparison of Generic Mayor and Manager Forms of Government		
Item	Mayor	Manager
		any point. Other limiting factors can be put in employment contract.
Future Planning	Mayor may have a vision, but must be able to execute within his or her tenure. May be less likely to make tough short-term decisions with long-term benefits.	Manager might have the ability to plan for future issues, but may not have a mandate from the people or the power to execute a vision.
Political Aspects	Generally more political as an elected official. Some time may be spent campaigning for subsequent terms.	Typically not seen as political, but rather managerial. No time spent campaigning.
Power Elements	Generally more powerful than a manager. May have more clout outside of the city. Only beholden to the voters.	Generally less formal power than a Mayor. Power generally rests with personality, relationship building, or given by the council.
Trends	Becoming less popular across the country. However, very common in larger cities in Massachusetts.	Becoming more popular around the country.

Beyond the substantive questions noted above, there is the notion that the residents of Cambridge might want to draft a charter that, even if it makes no major substantive changes, is a document that was written by and for Cambridge residents and that reflects their voice and values, rather than relying on standard text taken from an 80-year-old template provided in state law.

As described earlier, there are two options for charter change provided in Massachusetts.

- Electing a home rule charter commission following the Home Rule Amendment and Chapter 43B
- Petitioning the state legislature for special legislation ("the home rule petition").

While the two routes to charter change lead to the same aim - a new or revised charter - the procedures and timeline are quite different. For a detailed description of these pathways, please see Appendix G "Charting a Route for Charter Change" article. Cambridge could consider using either process, depending on the City's needs, interests, and other factors.

Project Next Steps

The next step in this project is for the Center project team to meet individually with each City Councilor in order to answer any questions about this memo and to understand what charter-related issues might be of particular importance or concern.

Following those meetings, the project team will draft a follow-up memo that will expand on areas in this memo where councilors had questions, and make recommendations on what process (or processes) and potential substantive topic areas the Council could consider, if there seems to be interest on the Council for undertaking further work on the charter.

Appendices:

- A. 1846 Act
- B. 1891 Act
- C. Colliers article
- D. Other cities comparables chart
- E. Descriptions of Worcester, Barnstable, and Chelsea
- F. Examples of types of reasons for review
- G. “Charting a Route for Charter Change” article

Samples Values Statement / Preambles

Newton - Preamble

We, the people of Newton, in order to reaffirm the customary and traditional liberties of the people with respect to the conduct of our local government, adopt this charter with the expectation and intent that the charter will continue and enhance the city's strong traditions of active voter participation; ethical, transparent and responsive leadership; wise use of public resources; respect for all in the community; and an engaged populace. We expect and intend that our government will be welcoming and inclusive and will promote equality and respect for all people.

Falmouth - Preamble

We, the people of the Town of Falmouth, Massachusetts, in order to reaffirm the customary and traditional liberties of the people with respect to the conduct of our local government and to take the fullest advantages inherent in the home rule amendments of the Constitution of the commonwealth, do hereby adopt the following Home Rule Charter for this town.

Framingham - Preamble

We, the people of Framingham, in order to reaffirm the customary and traditional liberties of the people with respect to the conduct of our local government, do adopt this Home Rule Charter. We need and want a local government that represents all of us, that supports vibrant neighborhoods, provides quality schools, protects safe and secure homes, values our elders, celebrates diversity, supports local businesses, promotes community participation, and cares for those in need. It is the expectation and intent that the Charter will continue and enhance voter participation, ethical, transparent and responsive leadership, wise use of public resources, respect for all in the community, and an engaged citizenry. We expect and intend that our government will promote equality, and be welcoming and inclusive.”

Somerville - Values Statement

We seek to revise the Somerville Charter to make our government more just, empowering, responsive and innovative for its residents.

- **To be just**, our city government should be structured in a way that fosters equity, fairness, inclusivity, and accessibility. It should encourage government officials to care for our most vulnerable residents, serve diverse needs, and seek social and environmental justice.
- **To be empowering**, our city government should provide avenues of engagement for as many of our residents as possible, including those who do not typically participate in governance. It should use inclusive language and give agency to all our residents.
- **To be responsive**, our city government should be approachable by our residents and accountable to our residents. It should be structured in a way that is logical and transparent while allowing the city to effectively and efficiently respond to problems that occur.

- **To be innovative**, we should seek creative solutions in our charter, and we should structure our city government so that it can adapt as required to respond equitably and efficiently to needs that may arise in the future

Cambridge City Council Guiding Principles / Goals

Guiding Principles

Accessible: We make it safe and easy for people to get where they need to go, for work and play.

Deliberate: We plan for the future so that we're ready for its opportunities and challenges.

Diverse: We make room for a mix of people to feel welcome and at home here.

Efficient: We get the work of government done smoothly, in a transparent, collaborative, and fiscally responsible manner.

Equitable: We treat each other fairly and without bias; we respond to the humanity we recognize in each other.

Innovative: We support the people and institutions that are inventing new ways to make life better.

Navigable: We make it easy for people to find their way to the city services they need, so all our residents can figure out how to "make the system work" for them.

Neighborly: We strive to connect to the people around us; we pitch in to help each other out.

Resilient: We take careful steps now to leave a better world for the generations to come.

Rooted: We preserve the feel of a deep history that runs under our city.

City Council Goals

Goal 1: Increase access to affordable housing for all income groups.

Goal 2: Ensure that Cambridge offers economic and educational opportunity to all.

Goal 3: Deepen our commitment to sustainable use of energy and strengthen our capacity for resilience.

Goal 4: Expand and deepen community engagement.

Goal 5: Develop more proactive, inclusive, and transparent city planning process.

Goal 6: Make it easy to move safely through the City, especially by sustainable modes of transportation.

Goal 7: Increase opportunities for all residents to enjoy the City's open spaces.

Goal 8: Ensure that Cambridge remains an Innovation Hub that integrates businesses of all sizes into a thriving ecosystem.

Goal 9: Improve Council's capacity to collaborate more effectively, make better decisions, and increase its accountability to the public.

Goal 10: Ensure City's budget allocates resources responsibly and responsively.

Goal 11: Ensure Public Safety efforts reflect current and emerging challenges and opportunities in a way that incorporates Cambridge's core values.

Goal 12: Eliminate Bias within the City workplace and wider community.

November 1, 2022

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee
From: Kathleen Born, Chair
Re: Planning Sub-Committee

Following the Committee's vote, at the last meeting held on October 25, 2022, to formally establish a Planning Sub-Committee, I would like to announce the following appointments:

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo
Jennifer Gilbert
Kai Long
Susan Shell
Jim Stockard
Lisa Peterson
Kathleen Born (ex-officio)



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Patricia Nolan
City Councillor

November 2, 2022

Dear Members of the Charter Review Committee:

I'd like to thank you for serving on this important committee. The Charter Review Committee (CRC) represents the first of several important steps in changing our existing charter. The CRC was formed to review the existing charter and to advise the City Council of changes that they consider to be necessary or desirable via a final report. Then the City Council will use the Committee's report as we consider amending or replacing the charter. Any Council proposal is then placed on the ballot for approval by the voters. As you embark on the first of these steps, I would like to say that I am grateful to each of you for your service. I have been following your work thus far and have reviewed the recordings of your meetings and it is clearly evident that you are all approaching this job with a deep commitment to improving our City. Before you get too far along in your deliberations, I wanted to send you some thoughts.

First, I would encourage you to schedule more opportunities for the public to give suggestions and to learn about what you are discussing. There has been a lot going on in the city, and it is understandable that not many are paying attention so far and attending your meetings. It's important that if we are going to consider making substantial changes to our charter, that the public is well informed and an active participant in the process.

Second, I have thought about the charter a lot since we made the decision to form this committee and I believe that a new charter is long overdue. I wanted to take this opportunity to share the topics I see as most important to cover during the course of your work. Per the language in our current charter, I know that your work needs to wrap up by next June. While this timeline may seem daunting, that timing is actually in line with other charter efforts in the Commonwealth, including in Framingham, which completely changed their entire government structure in a process that took less than a year.

Given the limited timeline, I know you have to decide how many of the multitude of potential changes to propose. As has been noted, it may make sense to limit the scope of your work to taking on a few big items that have come up over and over and leaving other items for the next charter review, which will be occurring in 2032. Based on the work done to date, and the community discussions over many years, I wanted to identify some issues needing discussion for possible change:

1. City Manager or Mayor: There are certainly pros and cons that you will need to flush out. The pro I see is that a mayor is fundamentally more democratic than a city manager. And of course most of our peer neighboring cities have mayoral systems - Boston, Somerville, and Newton to name a few. I look forward to your discussion and the community input on this central question.
2. Structure of the City Council: Should Cambridge continue with 9 at large Councillors? (the spelling of Councillor is British- time to use the American Councilor?) Or should we instead do what most peer cities nearby do, which is a combination of at-large and neighborhood based, such as Somerville and Boston. The School Committee elections should also be considered for possible change from all at-large.
3. Terms of City Council, and School Committee: Are two year terms the most effective for Cambridge? Or would three or four make more sense?
4. Balance of Power between City Council and Chief Executive of City: Whether Cambridge has a city manager or decides to consider a mayoral system, the current balance of power between the legislative and executive branches is problematic from my perspective and experience. A key place this balance of power plays out is in the budget process. The current council is told they can only vote the budget up or down. I had more power over the budget when I served on the School Committee. There, the administration proposed a budget and the School Committee could change anything we/they wanted in the budget, as long as we were following collective bargaining agreements and state law. For example, when we decided we wanted to add a full time social worker to every school, we voted for it and it happened. The council should have the same power over the city budget. Boston city council passed a charter reform to do exactly that last year. In reality, not much is likely to change about the budget, but it makes for more collaboration, transparency and accountability in the budget process.
5. Method of Ranked Choice Voting/Proportional Representation: I am a huge fan of RCV/PR and support staying with it; however, the idea of using fractional voting for distribution of surplus above quota has always seemed more democratic and fair to me.

Once again, I thank you all for your service to the City and I wish you all the best during the course of your work and look forward to ongoing dialogue. If you would like to discuss any of these points with me or any other charter issues, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Patricia Nolan
City Councillor

Re: Please sign me up for the mailing list

Jameson Quinn <jameson.quinn@gmail.com>

Thu 10/27/2022 12:55 PM

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

I realize that the committee hasn't yet set up a mechanism for submitting written public comments, and that such a mechanism would have to live up to open meetings laws that make setting it up nontrivial. However, I would like to be able to submit such comments on the history of Cambridge's voting system and the prospects for improving it. Please let the planning subcommittee know that there's a request to put this on the agenda.

Thanks,
Jameson

On Tue, 25 Oct 2022 at 19:23, Cambridge Charter Review Committee
<CharterReviewCommittee@cambridgema.gov> wrote:

Hi Jameson,

I've added your email to the list. Thank you.

From: Jameson Quinn <jameson.quinn@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, October 25, 2022 11:19 PM

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

Subject: Please sign me up for the mailing list

I'm glad to hear that there will be a mailing list. Please put my email on that list.

Thanks,
Jameson Quinn

Re: hoping to speak with Jessica about City Charter

Little Star of Ours <littlestarofours@gmail.com>

Tue 11/1/2022 3:02 PM

To: Robin Chen <rschance@gmail.com>; Cambridge Charter Review Committee
<CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Robin,

Thank you for your email and outreach to the Charter Review Committee. I will forward your email to our Chair and committee members for us to review and consider.

Please also feel free to join our Zoom meetings and share your experiences and ideas on early education and care in Cambridge. During our meetings, you will have time to voice and share your ideas. So again, thank you for taking the time to reach out to us, and we will share your email.

I am open to listening to more of your parent-resident experiences and recommendations. Please let me know the best way to connect or contact email.

Have a fantastic week ahead, Robin!

Best,
Jessica D Acevedo M.Ed.
Owner

Little Star of Ours, LLC

LittleStarofOurs.com

Family-Based Childcare

Cambridge, MA 02141

" Making a difference, one child at a time."

On Mon, Oct 31, 2022 at 3:36 PM Robin Chen <rschance@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi,

Sorry to be using a business inbox for a personal email. I'm hoping to speak with Jessica about our City Charter. I saw her name and encouragement to City residents in <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/10/4/cambridge-city-council-charter-review/> It seems like we share values around our youngest residents' perspectives having an impact on City government and vice versa.

I'm a Mom who lives with my family on Franklin St in Cambridge, and I care about under-18s' voting rights. I've read much that's been written about voting rights and voting age, and I'd like to have the chance to share what I know with Jessica first, and then perhaps with the wider Committee.

To pique your interest, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/10/27/let-children-vote-even-13-year-olds/>

This author is now working as Director of Speechwriting for the US Ambassador to the UN! [see](#)

Could our local voting age be lowered to 6th grader or 12 years old, in line with our participatory budgeting voting eligibility? I think that if the Committee recommended it, and if there were a coalition that campaigned about it over the next year, then the voters might approve this.

Robin
cell 978-809-2714