

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

Thursday, September 29, 2022

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Thursday, September 29, 2022. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:38 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.

Kaleb Abebe - Present
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo - Present
Mosammat Faria Afreen - Absent
Nikolas Bowie - Absent
Kevin Chen - Present
Max Clermont - Present
Jennifer Gilbert – Present (joined shortly after roll call at approximately 6:00pm)
Kai Long – Present
Patrick Magee – Present
Mina Makarious - Present
Lisa Peterson - Present
Ellen Shachter - Present
Susan Shell - Absent
Jim Stockard - Absent
Chair, Kathleen Born - Present

11 members recorded as present. Four members recorded as absent.

The Chair recognized Member Ellen Shachter who made a motion to accept the minutes from the meeting held on September 13, 2022. The motion was seconded by Member Patrick Magee.

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

Kaleb Abebe - Yes
Jessica Dejesus Acevedo - Yes
Mosammat Faria Afreen - Absent
Nikolas Bowie - Absent
Kevin Chen - Yes
Max Clermont - Yes
Jennifer Gilbert - Absent
Kai Long – Yes
Patrick Magee – Yes
Mina Makarious - Yes
Lisa Peterson - Yes
Ellen Shachter - Yes
Susan Shell - Absent

Jim Stockard - Absent

Chair, Kathleen Born – Yes

The vote was 10 – Yes, and 5-Absent. The motion to accept the minutes from the meeting held on September 13, 2022, passed.

The Chair gave an overview of her idea for the forming of subcommittees. The two subcommittees described were for “Agenda Setting” and “Drafting/Writing”. The Chair clarified her goals for the subcommittees and took a question from Member Ellen Shachter regarding the details of subcommittees. Libby Corbo of the Collins Center answered some questions from the Chair on their role in drafting language. Member Mina Makarious directed several questions to the City Solicitor’s office regarding how subcommittee work relates to open meeting law. Elliot Veloso of the City Solicitor’s office indicated that their office had concerns about the role subcommittees could play. The Chair asked Libby Corbo how other cities across Massachusetts worked within subcommittees and broadly the role that other city law departments played within a review process. Libby Corbo indicated that they typically do not have much interaction with city law departments at all during their work, but said that she had spoken on the phone with City Solicitor Nancy Glowa who said that the City Solicitor’s Office should be involved throughout the process. Elliot Veloso further stated his concern about the adherence to open meeting law and questioned whether the subcommittees, as currently understood, would be feasible under the law. The Chair and Elliot Veloso began an extended conversation about open meeting law and subcommittee work. Lisa Peterson asked Elliot Veloso about forming less formal, non-decision making, subcommittee groups to assist in scheduling and agenda-setting. Elliot Veloso indicated his skepticism in the ability of the Committee to work in subcommittees without breaking the open meeting law. Elliot Veloso then began reciting the open meeting law briefing materials from the Massachusetts Attorney General’s website.

The Chair recognized a comment from a member of the public commenting on the subcommittee work. Member Jennifer Gilbert asked about other ways to overcome the logistical challenges of planning for meetings. Member Max Clermont asked about simply expanding the current planning process to make the subcommittee less formal. Elliot Veloso again recited from the Attorney General’s guidance on open meeting law. Member Kai Long indicated her concern about City support for the Committee if it would be able to live up to the City Solicitor’s expectations under the law. Other members indicated agreement with the pressures of adhering to open meeting law without communicating outside of meeting times. Elliot Veloso indicated the law department would need to look into the issue further. Committee staff, Patrick Hayes, indicated that the Committee should move onto other business because of time restraints. The Chair indicated that she preferred to come to a conclusion on the issue of subcommittee work. Libby Corbo suggested that the discussion continue between the Chair, the law department, and the Collins Center after the meeting, as the Committee is limited by time restraints. The Chair asked the law department whether she could call a vote to form a subcommittee to begin agenda-setting. Elliot Veloso indicated there were still concerns about open meeting law. The discussion continued until approximately 6:45pm.

The Chair recognized Member Patrick Magee who made a motion to enter into the public record the email communications from the Chair to the entire Committee from September 22, 2022 and September 29, 2022. The motion was seconded by Member Kevin Chen.

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

Kaleb Abebe - Yes

Jessica Dejesus Acevedo - Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen - Absent

Nikolas Bowie - Absent

Kevin Chen - Yes

Max Clermont - Yes

Jennifer Gilbert - Yes

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarious - Yes

Lisa Peterson - Yes

Ellen Shachter - Yes

Susan Shell - Absent

Jim Stockard - Absent

Chair, Kathleen Born – Yes

The vote was 11 – Yes, and 4-Absent. The motion to accept two email communications from the Chair to the Committee, passed. The two email communications are attached to these minutes.

The Chair recognized several comments from the public on the open meeting law and subcommittee discussion. The Chair introduced a memo from the Collins Center with discussion questions. A copy of the memo is attached to these minutes. The Chair recognized Member Max Clermont who brought up a discussion of how to engage with public discussion going forward. The Chair described in detail her ideas for public input and recognized several Members for their ideas as well. Members Chen, Long, Clermont, Gilbert, Acevedo, Abebe, Magee, and Peterson indicated their thoughts on public engagement.

Members Peterson and Long, and the Chair indicated their further frustrations with the law department's opinion on the Committee's agenda-setting ability. Elliot Veloso again warned members about discussing any matters of substance outside of formal meetings. The Chair noted that she had a discussion with the City Manager about providing further staff options to assist the Committee with its work. Elliot Veloso again recited directly from the Attorney General's website to assist the Committee in understanding open meeting law and their limitations.

The Chair recognized Libby Corbo to discuss the Collins Center's role in agenda setting and the broad timeline of their work. Members Abebe, Shachter, and Makarious added their thoughts on the timeline of the work.

Chair Born called for public comment at 7:15pm. Two members of the public announced themselves to speak, John Hawkinson and Jameson Quinn. John Hawkinson made a comment about public comment generally and a comment on the drafting subcommittee. Jameson Quinn asked about commenting in the Q&A zoom function and thanked the Committee for their discussions.

The Chair indicated at 7:20pm that they should begin discussing the Collins Center memo with discussion topics. Noting the time, Libby Corbo indicated that given the time it might be pertinent to hear from Committee members. Kai Long talked about the ability of the City to be responsive to the needs of the community. Mina Makarious talked about which City services can be addressed by the Charter and which services are outside of the Charter recommendations. Ellen Shachter spoke about how short terms for City Councillors can hamper the responsiveness of elected officials. Lisa Peterson spoke about language barriers for folks in the City and reiterated Ellen Shachter's thoughts on term length for elected officials. Jessica Acevedo spoke about working to commit as a City to business owners who are people of color and providing more opportunities for people of color to become business stakeholders in Cambridge. Patrick Magee brought up the pros and cons on geographical representation and at-large, elected officials. Libby Corbo talked about how all these different issues have solutions that can be found in the Charter review process.

The Chair recognized Member Lisa Peterson who made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30pm. The motion was seconded by Member Ellen Shachter.

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

Kaleb Abebe - Yes

Jessica Dejesus Acevedo - Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen - Absent

Nikolas Bowie - Absent

Kevin Chen - Yes

Max Clermont - Yes

Jennifer Gilbert - Yes

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarious - Yes

Lisa Peterson - Yes

Ellen Shachter - Yes

Susan Shell - Absent

Jim Stockard - Absent

Chair, Kathleen Born – Yes

The vote was 11 – Yes, and 4-Absent. The motion to adjourn passed.

Chair Born announced that the next meeting would be on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. and it would be via zoom.

There being no further business before the Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Attachments: Communications to the Committee (not discussed)
Communications to the Committee from the Chair
Collins Center Memo – September 29, 2022