

Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commission Meeting Notes - February 25, 2021

In Attendance: Nefyn Meissner (co-chair), John Gintell (co-chair), Amelia Joselow (research assistant), Aren Stone, Lauryn McNair, Linden Huhmann, Greg MacDonough, Bill Barnert, Lesley Phillips, Noelani Gabriel, Cameron Van Fossen, Jessica Daniels, Warner Santiago, Kate Grams, Katy Harrison, Susan Bernstein, Soltan Bryce, Steven Lee, Bob Bordone, Rachel Oppenheimer

Absent: Noelani Kamelamela

Community Members: Mahala Burn, PhD

Minute Taker - Rachel Oppenheimer

Introductions

Approve Minutes from January Meeting - Because last month's minutes were delayed and Commissioners did not have the opportunity to review these prior to approval, it was moved that January 2021 minutes be approved at the March 2021 meeting instead.

Approve / Modify Agenda - It was asked that the City Forms Working Group meeting be added to tonight's agenda for discussion.

Report from Amelia

- LGBTQ+ Community Center - Amelia had created an advisory board consisting of a diverse set of community members that was separate from the Commission's working group. However, she was informed this is not permissible and it was decided this advisory group should be folded into the Commission's working group and any data/info from this large group be brought to the larger Commission for further discussions if needed.
Vote to allow members of the public on this Working Group
- Housing Report - This will now sit in/with the city's legal department with Amelia reporting to Vali Buland.
- All-gender Bathrooms - Spoke to Matt Nelson, city's business liaison. He says due to Covid and its repercussions businesses are feeling too overwhelmed to worry about all-genders bathrooms. However, Amelia plans to ask him to send an email about all-gender bathrooms to his contacts to make sure this issue stays on their radar.

Reports from Working Groups

- Communications - Hasn't met in some time, no updates to provide.
- Diversity - Met approximately two weeks ago, first time in a while. Reviewed previous work from this group and brainstormed what this group should be focusing on moving forward. Because this feels like a new endeavor, the groups decided to create a needs assessment and send this to the Commission. Using

this data the Diversity Working group plans to rebuild its mission, goals, and name. It was also requested this group work closely with the Recruiting Working Group during the recruiting process.

- Events - There is planning occurring for a co-hosted event with Porter Square Books (possibly April 1st) for authors discussing queer YA books (authors not booked yet), and it is hoped this might become a regular event. The Commission would also like to put on a musical performance when possible and was asked to reach out to anyone in their network who is a musician.
- Strategic Planning - Last meeting one day ago. There was a brief review of what this working group is about: focusing on “bigger picture” issues for the Commission. Currently, they have been reviewing the Commission’s attendance and leave of absence policy and are close to completing a first draft. They plan to have this draft complete and for the Commission’s review at the March 2021 meeting.
- City Forms - The group met as per a recent request by the Community Development Department (CDD) to make recommendations around language asking people’s gender/gender identity. So far the group has discussed the city using a drop-down checklist and listing the choices alphabetically to avoid a possible hierarchical system. This led to a discussion at tonight’s meetings about this topics along with additional recommendations/suggestions such as:
 1. Understanding why a department wants this info in the first place and, if they do need it, giving the public a brief explanation as to why it is being collected.
 2. As departments collect this info, encourage the style and language to be consistent across departments.
 3. Not keeping “transfemale” and “transmale” as a separate category and this can perpetuate othering, but also transgender individuals may identify as male/female (without “trans” label).
 4. Providing guidance to departments about when/if this info needs to be collected in the first place.
 5. Pros/cons of including “cisgender”.
 6. Leaving this space blank and allowing the person to self-identify.
 7. Using the language “feminine/masculine/non-binary” rather than “female/male”.
 8. If there is a checkbox, adding brief definitions of each for those people who may not be current with the evolving language.
 9. Asking “transfemale/transmale” and a pop-up category under “female/male”.

Updates on Onboarding New Commissioners

- Including review of all Working Groups - New Commissioners were encouraged to join the various working groups. They were directed to the Google docs of current working groups.

Brief review of Open Meeting Law - A brief review of the MA Open Meeting Law was reviewed, specifically when and where topics can and cannot be discussed. John

agreed to send a link to the MA Open Meeting Law if any Commissioner should want to review these in the future.

Public Comment / Announcements - It was recommended that a “Buddy System” be created so new Commissioners can have a “buddy” to check in and help navigate onboarding the Commission.

A Commissioner brought to our attention a recent homophobic incident (use of a slur) that occurred at a recent Cambridge Democratic Party meeting. This Commission offered support to the targeted person. The Commission offered to be of assistance should the target person feel it helpful.

Next Meeting: Thursday March 25, 2021