

Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commission Meeting  
Thursday, October 22, 2020  
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Commissioners in attendance: Bill Barnett; Susan Bernstein; Maya Escobar; John Gintell; Kate Grams; Steven Lee; Aren Stone; Rachel Oppenheimer; Jessica Daniels; Linden Britt Huhman; Lesley Phillips; Gregory MacDonough; Nefyn Meissner   Commissioner Research Associate: Amelia Joselow  
Commissioners absent: Noe Kamelamela

Guest speaker: Brian Corr

Brian Corr presented on Cambridge's Police Review and Advisory Board. Brian has overseen the Board since 2008 (it was formed in 1984), and expanded it from a one-person department to better receive complaints and make policy recommendations. The U.S. has 18,000 police departments; only 160 of these have civilian oversight committees. Brian served as president of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement for 3 years and worked with civilian oversight boards in New Mexico and Canada. This is a civilian board with no police on it.

There have been 10 complaints submitted to the Board in the past year. Recent years have had an average of 4-5 complaints; in the 1990s the average was 15-20. Reasons for fewer complaints may be that people use social media or approach the City Council instead; some of these complaints do circle back to the Board. Complaints are mostly about behavior and the caller not getting the response they wanted.

Questions from the Commission with Brian's answers:

*On tensions between the LGBTQ+ community and the Cambridge police: how does Cambridge compare to other cities in this regard and what could be improved?*

The department's training and awareness addresses sexual orientation but awareness around gender identity is still a work in progress. The city's SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) training has helped but continued dialogue and training is necessary. This includes recognition of systemic racism and its intersection with LGBTQ+ community.

People are open to new information but don't seek it out on their own.

*What happens when the review board finds an officer at fault?*

The review board does not have disciplinary power. The proposed statewide police reform bill would make police misconduct records public.

*At a recent Black Lives Matter rally in Cambridge there were concerns about the lack of Cambridge residents hired by the police department. How much turnover is there?*

Current civil service law requirements preference only veterans. There is conversation about withdrawing from civil service, which will mean negotiating with unions. The city's cadet program expedites bringing in Cambridge residents; five cadets were present at the BLM rally. Because Cambridge is an expensive city to live in, some Cambridge natives do work for the police force but no longer live in Cambridge. There are also not enough Cambridge applicants.

*Does preference for hiring veterans enforce a warrior mindset rather than a guardian mindset?*

Cambridge founded its own police academy in order to improve training. They are addressing the role of trauma in policing, which could stem from military service or other experiences. Another hiring issue is that the force is mostly male; increasing women hires would do more to mirror the community

than hiring Cambridge residents.

*The LGBTQ+ Commission has made changes to its relationship with the police department. Any further thoughts on this? How can we work with the police in positive ways?*

Think about what the Commission's goals are and how and when partnership will promote those goals. General advice: we are on the same team.

Further discussion:

Some Commissioners think that the Commission would have a better chance at influencing the police department if it maintains a relationship with them. The police department also serves as a connection to both university and transit police.

Brian pointed out that appointing a police liaison to the commissions was initiated by the police department. This could be an opportunity to rethink what the Commission wants and be an active decider on next steps in that relationship.

The LGBTQ+ Commission is the only Cambridge commission that has been addressing the police liaison relationship so far.

Steven mentioned a past invitation extended by the police department to tour their offices; it helped to better understand what happens on their end. Do they still offer this? Brian hadn't heard about it but thinks it is a good idea. Mentioned quarterly stakeholders meetings as another chance to learn more; these are connected with family and social services units.

Tabled vote on how to continue the Commission's relationship with the police department for a later meeting.

**Domestic Partnership Ordinance**

John Gintell reviewed the history of the Cambridge ordinance. Cambridge legal department directed the proposed changes to the ordinance to the Commission for review, and would like a speedy response. John, Linden, and Lesley have worked on revisions to the proposed ordinance changes.

Feedback from Kimberly Rhoten has been incorporated into proposed revisions. Once the Commission submits feedback to the legal department they will assess proposed changes and respond to the Commission before submitting the ordinance to City Council. There will still be opportunity for additional feedback and questions at both the City Council and the Ordinance meetings.

Linden and Lesley volunteered to review the proposed changes and suggest any other changes before they were communicated to the legal department. Commissioners voted to approve this action.

**Strategic Planning**

The Strategic Planning Committee met on October 12 to review items from the August meeting.

Succession planning for co-chair seats:

Ordinance mandates that the Commission holds an annual election for two co-chairs.

Discussion over whether to schedule a January or November election. Suggestion to keep co-chair and vice-chair appointments separate, with vice-chair assignments (by co-chairs) sometime after January. Motion to hold November election approved. Steven will send out the Strategic Planning Committee's process for nomination. Commissioners may contact Aren and John with questions about co-chairing

responsibilities.

**Recruitment for open commissioner positions:**

Emphasis on diversity (BIPOC, youth, and disability representation) and intersectionality. Also looking for candidates with social media, community organizing, local business and legal skills.

Commissioners are encouraged to invite prospective candidates to attend the next meeting on November 19.

**Project Report**

-National Coming Out Day virtual event went really well!

-Start emailing suggestions for events to John, Aren, Nefyn and Amelia.

-November newsletter on the way.

-Bill will post the National Coming Out Day video to Facebook; it is already on the Commission's Youtube channel and CCTV. Question on how to track views; Facebook should have a tracker.