

**Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commission
Commission Meeting
August 6, 2020 Virtual Zoom Meeting**

Commissioners In Attendance: Bill Barnert; Jessica Daniels; John Gintell; Britt Huhmann; Steven Lee; Mal Malme; Nefyn Meissner; Rachel Oppenheimer; Lesley Phillips; Aren Stone; Kimm Topping; Meesh Zucker

Commission Staff in Attendance: Amelia Joselow

Commissioners Absent: Susan Bernstein, Maya Escobar; Catherine Grams; Noe Kamelamela; Greg MacDonough; Bob Parlin; Leo Austin-Spooner; Silas Weiner

These minutes reflect overall themes. Effort was made to record direct comments as carefully as possible to preserve the voices of the Commissioners making them.

- **Opening** Co-Chair Kimm Topping facilitated the meeting with Nefyn Meissner recording meeting minutes.
- **July Meeting Minutes** The Commission approved the July Meeting minutes.
- **Working Group Reports**
 - **Police Relations Working Group**
 - **Leadership Update & Overall Update**
 - Jessica has volunteered to serve as acting head of this group in Kimm's place.
 - The Working Group (WG) opened with a note that there are many different opinions and feelings among members of the Commission and among the citizens of Cambridge about the Cambridge Police Department (CPD), the police in general, and related topics.
 - **Highlights**
 - It was recommended that the Commission and the Working Group have a more detailed discussion to determine if and how we maintain our relationship with CPD and to consider creating similar relationships with the Public Health Department and similar departments in the City..
 - It was noted that we have yet to achieve some of our original goals for working with CPD (Updated LGBTQ+ training, for CPD, the Fire Department, local paramedics, campus police departments, etc.). This work was halted by the shutdown.
 - The Commission discussed at length the diversity of opinions within the Commission about our communications with CPD, the

idea of defunding the police, the terminology around defunding/reallocating funds, etc.

■ **Action Items:**

- Connect with Brian Corr (Peace Commission for the City of Cambridge; Executive Secretary for Police Review and Advisory Board)
- Connect with Youth on Fire about their relationship with CPD
- Connect with the Department of Public Health and other City departments to broaden the scope of our conversations with City government
- Continue discussion about LGBTQ+ training, specifically alternatives to the previously used GOAL training, with the aim of recommending a new training program
- Revisit the work that some Commissioners did to draft a statement on anti-racism
- Continue broader discussions about anti-racism and diversity within the Commission

■ **Detailed Comments from Commissioners:**

- Action items were discussed and identified, with Commissioners and Working Group members sharing ideas, thoughts, and reflections.
- Commissioners commented:
 - on the importance of considering whether we have any ability to comment on or advise the City on budgeting, potential expansions to services available to community members related to policing and the LGBTQ+ community
 - that the Commission may want to better discern our role in working with the police, our stance on CPD, etc. before moving forward
 - that there is an ongoing tension between the personal politics of individual members and the work of the Commission as a collective group
 - that we can take time to rethink and assess our relationship with Commissioner Bard (how often and in what formats we engage with the Commissioner, how we spend meeting time, etc.)
 - that it is important to clarify our stance as a Commission before communicating it to CPD and members of the public
 - that some feel that CPD's image relative to other PD in the country is good and that Cambridge as a city has a solid budget where other municipalities might not
 - that there are intertwining histories of different police forces in the United States (e.g. Boston, New York, Southern,

etc.); we should focus on *our* relationship with the police instead of funding

- that some feel that having a relationship with the police is different than having an alliance with them
- that CPD understands that GOAL training was lackluster and better training is needed
- that folks have questions about the purpose of our work trying to encourage CPD to get training to happen
- that GOAL New England used to function well, that training has gone to the wayside recently, that we had plans to review GOAL again before the pandemic
- that CPD is in charge of training CPD; that we can only advise them and serve in a watchdog role
- that there is a difference between asking questions of CPD and promoting CPD; some feel we should do the former and not the latter

- **Diversity Working Group**

- **Overall Update**

- Has come and gone over the years.
 - Strong interest in revitalizing it.

- **Highlights**

- The Working Group (WG) raised the question about whether we should refocus the WG as an Anti-Racist Group.
 - Several Commissioners expressed support and a desire to revitalize it.
 - The Working Group membership was reviewed and Commissioners were invited to join, resulting in the following Commissioners joining, confirming membership, or being identified as formerly joining: Kimm, Aren, Rachel, Mal, Leo, Nefyn

- **Action Items**

- WG should meet soon and refine scope, additional action items.
 - The group needs a lead Commissioner

- **Pride Planning Group**

- **Overall Updates:**

- Rachel, Aren, Noe, and John all attended the most recent meeting.
 - The group brainstormed about October event planning including: partnership with the Mayor; ways to use Zoom and other platforms; ways to have events outside of Zoom.
 - There were conversations about the possibility to do different kinds of programming (e.g. panel discussions, etc.); potential to tie this to the Commission's work around the Community Center and other efforts.

■ Highlights

- The Commission and Working Group renamed the WG the Pride and National Coming Out Day Working Group to reflect the shift from Pride programming this past summer to National Coming Out Day programming this coming October.
- Co-Chair Aren clarified the workflow between the Commission and Working Groups for Nefyn. Working Groups create and clarify objectives and present proposals and ideas to the full Commission for approval.

■ Action Items

- The Working Group will schedule a meeting with City Hall.
- The Working Group will expedite selecting programming for Coming Out Day and update the Commission.
- Co-Chair Kimm will reach out to the Mayor and move the Working Group forward.

■ Detailed Comments

- Rachel shared more detailed Working Group notes, including:
 - Possibilities for programming, including:
 - panels
 - storytelling
 - art
 - Breakout Rooms
 - Themes for programming, including:
 - Youth (coming out)
 - Minorities
 - Elders
 - BIPOC
 - Senior/Youth Storytelling/Connecting Panel
 - LGBTQ+ Center Plug
 - Intersectionality
 - Coming Out in the Pandemic
 - Coming Out When You Can't Go Out
 - Racial Justice
- Commissioners commented:
 - that we could signal external groups in order to capitalize on the Starlight Square space in Cambridge
 - that we should think about weather/climate and impact on Coming Out Day programming
 - potential to further explore gender nonconforming/gender nonbinary issues as a Commission and put on programming related to this
 - that Coming Out Day is only two months away, that there needs to be quick work to execute on programming.

- **All Gender Bathrooms Working Group**
 - **Overall Update**
 - The work is long and ongoing for years.
 - Action items reflect tangible steps forward.
 - **Highlights**
 - Working Group and Amelia continue to take steps to make concrete recommendations to the City.
 - The city has now made All Gender Bathroom signs to put up on all single stall bathrooms in city-owned buildings. Amelia has worked steadily on this for the past couple of years.
 - **Action Items**
 - John will send in a request to the City Manager about the need for legal counsel to move toward proposing an Ordinance to require all single-stall bathrooms in the City to be gender neutral
 - Amelia will check on the status of other aspects of the project.
- **Domestic Partnership Ordinance**
 - The Commission discussed questions, concerns, and potential next steps related to a potential expansion of the Domestic Partnership Ordinance to be inclusive of folks who are polyamorous, etc.
 - John shared that the Cambridge ordinance is not yet off the ground and that the Commission is now positioned to make recommendations to the City; John will follow up with the City Manager about who to engage with about the issue and who to direct citizens to with questions, etc.
 - Lesley offered to look into the language of the Somerville Ordinance and to seek contact with legal resources
- **Report from Amelia on LGBTQ Community Center Project**
 - Amelia shared that the Commission has completed two focus groups (Youth, Adult), that each had five attendees, and that the size was manageable and the meetings productive.
 - There is a final focus group scheduled for Seniors; marketing is continuing for that.
 - Amelia has enjoyed being able to record the sessions, take notes, etc., given that the focus groups have been on Zoom; will share notes and findings with the Commission.
- **Strategic Planning Meeting Update**
 - Steven reminded folks that the Strategic Planning Working Group will be meeting the following week for Commissioners to check in about our work as a Commission, our working relationships, etc. All Commissioners are invited to attend.
 - The Strategic Planning team and Co-Chairs have discussed that it is a good time to do a group check-in.

- Steven sent a survey for Commissioners. The survey has been in the works for a while and that he hopes it is useful and can guide the conversation at the upcoming meeting.
- It was confirmed that all Commissioners are warmly encouraged to complete the survey and attend the meeting.
- **Other Items**
 - **Communications Working Group**
 - Bill shared that the Communications Working Group met and that there are a couple projects in the works that will be shared with the Commission.
 - Aren and others are grateful to Bill and the Communications Working Group for the work they do.
 - **Nonbinary and Gendernonconforming Issues**
 - Lesley suggested that it might be helpful to have a trainings, conversations, or programming related to the nonbinary/gender nonconforming community.
 - Detailed discussion followed with Commissioners discussing if and how such work could or should be done.
 - Commissioners also discussed:
 - whether members who identify at nonbinary/gender nonconforming could share about their identities/experiences at a meeting
 - that individual Commissioners can educate themselves outside of Commission meetings before discussing this topic more, or in lieu of having official programming, conversations, etc.
 - a motion to have a training on this topic was tabled until the next meeting to allow for fuller discussion
- **Closing** The meeting ran several minutes over time. The meeting adjourned.
- **Next Commission Meeting:** September 24th