



## Regular Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

**Present:** Co-Chairs Abhishek Raman and Jen Sparks, Commissioners Tsamchoe Dolma, Eva Gottschalk, Karin Lin, and Anna Mejia

CIRC Staff: Executive Director Jennifer Mathews, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa, and Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

**Absent:** Commissioners Ashebir Gezmu, Subandha Karmacharya, Aleksandra Ibrahim, Joe Manok, and Karim Razzaz

### 1. Call to order

Co-Chair Raman called the meeting to order at 6:23 pm.

### 2. Public comment

A member of the public was present at the start of the virtual meeting but only to observe. There was no public comment.

### 3. Review and approval of February 22, 2022 minutes

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the February 22, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Lin moved to approve the meeting minutes, and Co-Chair Sparks seconded. Commissioners Lin, Sparks, Dolma, Gottschalk, and Abhishek voted to approve the minutes, Commissioner Mejia abstained from the vote.

### 4. Commission Working Groups Follow-Up Discussion

Co-Chair Raman presented a draft of the [Strategic Planning Process](#). The working group committee consists of Co-Chair Raman, Commissioners Gottschalk, Manok, Razzaz, and Lin. Co-Chair Raman explained there are three areas of focus: what has been accomplished, immigration issues, and priorities. The Strategic Planning Process includes a retreat, to occur in May and serve as a longer meeting not open to the public. Co-Chair Raman suggested the help of a subject matter expert and skilled facilitator to execute the process. Representatives from the Office of New Bostonians and the City of Somerville were mentioned as possible speakers. The goal would be to hear from a speaker who shares a model for strategic planning to inspire the Commission to work as a team. The members of the Commission were encouraged to think of additional speakers to share at the next meeting. For location, empty rooms in the Arts Council were discussed, along with the Library. The Commission will continue to discuss next steps for strategic planning and other potential working groups at the next meeting.

#### Welcoming Event Working Group

ED Mathews proposed the Commission could start thinking about a Welcoming Event now that the city is reopening. Previously, the Welcoming was organized by members of the Commission. ED Mathews gauged the Commission's interest in forming a working group for a Welcoming Event. Co-Chair Sparks and Commissioner Mejia expressed interest in helping with planning. There was a discussion about finding free resources through the Facebook Group: Buy Nothing Cambridge. The working group would report back to the Commission about their ideas and possible next steps.

### 5. Staff Updates

#### KYR with the Central Square Public Library

Executive Director (ED) Mathews reminded the Commission about the "Know Your Rights" with the Central Square Library. CIRC staff sent the Commission a calendar hold for the virtual event scheduled for April 13, 2022 from 6-7:30 p.m.

### **American Rescue Plan Act – Language Justice Work**

ED Mathews announced that through the collaboration with the Department of Human Service Program (DHSP) the city has secured \$250,000 toward language justice work in FY 2023.

### **Cambridge De Novo Legal Screening Clinic**

ED Mathews reported that 16 clients called the virtual clinic in February.

### **Municipal Immigrant Support Network (MISN)**

ED Mathews continues to attend the MISN quarterly meetings comprised of cities and towns in Massachusetts led by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

### **Boston Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Advancement**

There is an Afghan/Haitian benefit group to help with identifying new arriving immigrants who may need support in the region. ED Mathews explained that State Office’s “Welcoming Network” also meets to discuss resettlement benefits. ED Mathews will be joining these meetings moving forward.

### **October City Council Order**

Cambridge City Council issued an order regarding the feasibility of a uniform approach to support refugee resettlement looking to formalize a process with the Federal Government. ED Mathews will submit a response explaining that many people who are refugees are not going through the formal process. ED Mathews is looking toward ways to work in partnership with other departments.

### **Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto Report**

Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto announced her outreach activities and updates about new initiatives happening in Cambridge. ISL Wabeto attended 9 community events and 2 focus groups for the City Manager Search. ISL Wabeto participated in 4 virtual events with the Library and a Community Development Department focus group with its new Outreach Workers. ISL Wabeto explained that there is limited capacity for the City’s Summer Camps, childcare for the next school year, and the Birth to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade program. Priority families are those with single parents, or who have English as a second language, receive free lunch, or are low income. ISL Wabeto will participate in a Cambridge Public Schools event where students will hear stories in different languages. ISL Wabeto will read Amharic books to SEI/ELL elementary students.

Co-Chair Sparks moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Mejia. The adjournment was approved unanimously.

**The next commission meeting will be on Tuesday, April 20, 2022, at 6 pm via Virtual Zoom meeting.**