



Cambridge Peace Commission

A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Minutes of the Peace Commission Meeting • September 21, 2022

Subject to the approval of the Commission

Commission Members Present: Co-Chair Larry Kim, Co-Chair Elka Kuhlman, Kaleb Abebe, Annie Brown, Sarah DeMott, Kaza Fraley, Yasmine Hung, David Seeman, Bonnie Talbert

City Staff Present: Executive Director Brian Corr, CPD Superintendent Fred Cabral

Call to Order: Co-Chair Kuhlman called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Checking In

- People shared brief updates about their summer and how they were doing.

Executive Director's Report

- Exec. Dir. Corr reported that he gave an in-person talk about Juneteenth on Thursday, June 30 at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center.
- He also reported that he helped plan and he MC'd the 35th Anniversary Celebration of the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association on September 8, which included the Mayor, some of the founders, and a program of remarks and music. There is also a temporary display of historical photographs and materials at City Hall.
- After the City's the IT people solved some technical problems and then created a "minutes wizard," the Peace Commission's minutes are updated and posted back to 2008.
- Exec. Dir. Corr has reached out to St. Peter's Episcopal Church to see if they would be able to host the 2023 MLK Day Commemoration as they have in the past, assuming that it can be done in person
- He also reported that for the time being, the City is continuing to have most boards and commission meet virtually so that members of the public can participate remotely, as there are only a few meeting spaces that have the technology (such as the City Council chamber) and limited IT staffing for fully hybrid meetings. Commission members shared their experiences with hybrid and in-person meetings and discussed the desire to return to in-person meetings as soon as possible.

Meet Your Neighbor Day 2022

- Ex. Dir Corr gave an overview of the more than 20 gatherings that took place, and his visits to most of them on Sunday, Sept. 18:
 - Some examples of events: Mass Audubon, open houses, the Porter Square firefighters, gatherings in parks, and churches hosting events. They took place across the city and the only neighborhood that didn't have many was East Cambridge didn't seem to have any.
 - Most had food/drink (lemonade, coffee, pastries), some had games, one gave out backpacks
 - In addition to emails from the Peace Commission, this year the City highlighted it in some of its daily emails, and the *Cambridge Chronicle* printed a notice based on the City's press release – and that prompted some people to organize gatherings events.

- Hopes it will become more ingrained in the city and that people will say: “Yeah, it’s the third Sunday in September, let’s do something”
- Capturing the Events: To help measure the impact of Meet Your Neighbor Day, Exec. Dir. Corr has asked people who organized gatherings if they can share a few sentences why they did it and what their experiences were. One person, a recent immigrant from Germany heard about it from the *Chronicle* and had an event in her home and sent a snippet. Corr is also looking for pictures, and in response to a concern about taking photos that show faces he noted thinks it is generally okay if it is outside at a public event where people might not have an expectation of privacy, and he also made sure to ask people if it was okay to take pictures that could be used by the City in publicity or other publications.
 - Looking Ahead: How to promote it more including how to do some graphic design next year that is simple, inviting and provides some inspiration. Commission Member DeMott mentioned that it might be interesting to have a contest for creating a flyer and that there’s an annual event on Martha’s Vineyard where people collect the flyers from each year.
 - Commission members shared their experiences and reflections on the activities this year and for looking forward:
 - Co-Chair Kim noted that staff at his church came to him and suggested they do something at the church. Went to an older man who is often at the church supporting the unhoused population who said to get pastries from a bakery, and he served and helped lead the event.
 - Commission Member Brown: put up posters and passed out flyers and emailed the neighborhood listserv and collaborated with the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association who provided coffee for three events.
 - Raymond Park Event:
 - Co-Chair Kuhlman was happy to collaborate and thought it was great to have partners. It was nice to co-host because each of us had a different personality and way of interacting that worked nicely.
 - Commission Member Talbert: Lives on the same street as Co-Chair Kuhlman and Commission Member DeMott is nearby. Commission Member DeMott made a flyer. Co-Chair Kuhlman has teacher supplies and posters (hidden gems, what they love about the neighborhood). Many wanted to chit chat. Love the pictures to see what others did as well.
 - Commission Member DeMott: Little boy named Neil (age 5) who saw the flyer and brought his dad. Another woman was a recent widow and she brought spinach fritters/gift of food. She wants to do a cooking night so there were follow-up ideas/next steps for creating community.
 - Other comments and reflections:
 - Commission Member Brown: Could collaborate with Play Streets
 - Exec. Dir. Corr: We need to get the word out soon if people want to plan something involving Play Streets from the City. However, we also want to allow people to plan things spontaneously, as happened this year after the *Cambridge Chronicle* article. Interplay between the Community Development Department—what is their capacity. Some people wanted to have voter sign-up at each, but there is a balance between mandating that at all events. We need to speak both to the planners (who might want a guide) and leave room for spontaneity.
 - David: With 5 years on the commission, he sees an impressive evolution of the Meet Your Neighbor Day project.

Peace Commission Retreat: Recapping and Moving Forward

- Co-Chair Kuhlman noted that she had captured the skills and passions that people shared during the retreat

- The co-chairs and the exec. director shared some reflections based on those and ask the Commission to consider two possibilities that could be done in tandem:
 - Reviving a planned project focused on issues of race and racism from just before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020: A three-part series films screenings, each followed by facilitated small group discussion, using the video series “RACE: the Power of an Illusion.”
 - This would need people to facilitate small groups.
 - Perhaps for Spring 2023, in person, at the Main Library.
 - Brainstorm and create a new event that draws on the skills and passions of all of the current members of the Peace Commission all of us, perhaps taking place in. Fall 2023.
- The Commission discussed reviving the film and discussion series:
 - Commission Member Abebe asked if there are materials from 2020. Co-Chair Kuhlman: can send a link from Race the Power of an Illusion (California Newsreel) and the agenda/template (courageous conversation, circle process, small group facilitators) as well as a poster/flyer intended to be a three-part series. Elka explains they were focused on the first video (Episode 1) and hadn’t planned the next two.
 - Commission Member DeMott organizes an anti-racist film series at Harvard. She is interested in the idea of the “Beloved Community” as described by Dr. Martin Luther King, and mentioned a film with a postal carrier walking in St. Louis and thinking about how all these streets named after Dr. King are not cared for in a way that honors his legacy.
 - Commission Member Hung noted that she likes the idea of reviving this project; the topic of race feels very relevant. She would prefer to be on the event planning side rather than the facilitation. Commission Member Abebe echoed those sentiments and Co-Chair Kuhlman noted that she is comfortable facilitating in her professional setting, but she is intimidated about facilitating in public, and would like to learn more about how to build those skills. Commission Member DeMott wants to know more about whether the Commission would bring people in to build skills or look within, and Commission Member Talbert said that she has a collection of scripts that can help people feel more comfortable. Exec. Dir. Corr noted that people pairing up and working in partnership as co-facilitators can help with the work and can also help people learn facilitation from each other.
 - Commission Member Hung discussed how the discussion could go and hearkened back to discussions at her organization that held space for people to share about anti-Asian hate and to listen to each other and not begin debating. Co-Chair Kim stated that the idea of holding space is very much about connecting and healing. Excited about the training piece as well, and remembered a great event where the final word was from a completely different worldview that really changed the tenor of the event. Co-Chair Kuhlman was reminded of the community sessions called “Cambridge Digs Deep” and the challenges of people with diverse identities potentially having very different experiences of the same conversation.
 - Co-Chair Kim explained that in 2020 the Commission planned to frame it the discussions and not have them be open-ended and with conversation norms to manage expectations and create a safe space by acknowledge that upfront.
 - Exec. Dir. Corr shared the proposed discussion questions from 2020:
 - What stood out for you as powerful in the documentary?
 - Did anything surprise you while watching the documentary?
 - What are your take-aways from this evening?

Next Steps and Wrap Up

- Educating ourselves about the video and program planning from 2020
- Look into dates at the Main Library

- Consider collaborating with Civic Unity
- Co-Chairs Kim and Kuhlman and Exec. Dir. Corr will work on detailed plan for the film screening and discussion

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 PM on a motion from Commission Member DeMott, seconded by Commission Member Hung, approved by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the Peace Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 19, 2022 via Zoom.