

Meeting Minutes – May 13, 2026

April

Present: Vicky Abou Zeid, Carolina Palvacino Maggio, Pauline Wells

Virtual: Sweta Joshi

Staff: Diana Milkey, Shameka Gregory

Absent: Caitlin Dube

1. **Call to Order**
 - a. Executive Director Shameka Gregory called this meeting of the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women to order at 6:51 PM.
2. **Check In: What is something you've learned from a woman in your life that you value?**
3. **Mediation Meeting with CM and Chief Brown**
 - a. This was moved up the agenda
 - b. Commissioner Carolina Palvacino-Maggio expresses confusion about the decision to not have a mediator.
 - i. SG explains that the mediator opted to not be a part of this meeting due to concerns about ability to successfully move through the process given constraints of Open Meeting Law and participants concerns with holding mediation in the form of an Open Meeting.
4. **Vote to accept meeting minutes 3/11/26**
 - a. Accepted.
 - b. **Note: April meeting cancelled as we didn't have quorum**
5. **50th Anniversary Brainstorming/Planning (Building on ideas from last meeting)**
 - a. CPM suggests honoring women through history for 50th
 - b. SG suggests banners above the streets similar to the ones in Harvard Square and Central Square that feature women Cantabridgians from history
 - i. CPM suggests getting signs for every street in Cambridge. The rest of the Commission objects to such a high number due to price, but want to with a few dedicated places
 - ii. SG suggests working with the Historical Commission to find profiles for women in Cambridge

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- c. SG brings up the Oratorical Fest in Oakland, California held on behalf of MLK Jr. during which participants memorize a poem or speech for a contest. She suggests this idea for Cambridge with a focus on women and gender non-conforming authorship.
 - i. Staff Member Diana Milkey relates this to a contest titled “Poetry Out Loud” that is a similar celebration focused on poetry
 - ii. CPM relates it to “The Vagina Monologues,” suggesting a stage performance-type event
 - iii. SG says she will be in touch with schools to talk about youth speakers for this contest, and will update the Commission on progress
 - iv. CPM suggests an award for the winner. SG says there can’t be a monetary award, but suggests gift cards or scholarships or opportunities to present in front of School Committee/City Council
- d. SG asks for suggestions for when to have the gathering for past and present commissioners and staff from the Women’s Commission
 - i. SG asks for the best time of year to have the event and the Commission decides roughly around May of 2027 or September when Commission was founded.
 - ii. SG asks about ideas for venues. Commissioner Pauline Wells suggests the library, but SG says she was thinking more of a dinner event type venue.
 - 1. DM suggests the Cambridge Multicultural Center space that the Civic Service celebration was held at. SG raises concerns about accessibility and sound issues, but will look into it.
 - 2. PW suggests a university campus building in the area. SG suggests MIT.
 - 3. PW suggests the empty top floor of the Cambridge Galleria, as they’ve worked with the Commission before. SG says they would have to hire a decorator but will consider it as PW says it would be free. SG says she will remind PW to contact them and ask about this.
 - 4. PW suggests the venue for the Harvard Square Business Awards and struggles to recall the name but says it’s on the corner of Hawthorne Street.
 - iii. CPM asks about the proposed budget for this event.
 - 1. SG says that there will be no increase in funding for this budget cycle. Request was denied.

6. New Members

- a. SG confirms with the present members of the Commission that they would like to continue to serve on the Commission.
 - i. PW says that she is still interested, but if she is not able to, she would be able to provide recommendations for a police liaison.
 - ii. CPM confirms she wants to stay another term.
 - iii. Commissioner Sweta Joshi confirms that she would like to finish her term. Unsure about after.
 - iv. Commissioner Vicky Abou Zeid confirms that she is staying on the Commission.
- b. SG confirms the members of the Commission who have chosen to terminate their

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service and states that she will be bringing on 12 new commissioners out of 39 applicants. She is hoping to bring the new Commissioners to their first meeting in July.

- i. CPM suggests a later meeting, as she won't be around for this meeting. PW and VAZ agree, saying they don't usually have meetings in the summertime.
- ii. SG asks to have the meeting remotely, as she wants to prioritize planning for the 50th and continuing the work. The Commission generally agrees and instructs her to pick a day that may work for a late June or July hybrid meeting and that they will work around the schedule.
- iii. Meeting will be July 8th from 6-8
- iv. PW motions to switch from a fully in-person meeting model to a hybrid model.
 1. Seconded
 2. Votes as follows
 - a. CPM – Yea
 - b. VAZ – Yea
 - c. SJ – Abstain
 - d. PW – Yea
 3. Voted in

7. Event Updates

a. Book Club focused on Combahee River Collective

- i. April 28th kicked off then alternating btw. Saturdays and Tuesdays (starting May 9th) with four sessions total
- ii. SG reports that the participation was excellent and that they're currently working on the book. Feedback has been incredibly positive.
- iii. The next meeting of the book club is on Saturday, May
- iv. CPM expresses excitement about possibly reading the book and asks for Shameka to send the invitation out.
 1. SG suggests some kind of "book club" for the Women's Commission with essays, poems, articles, etc. to reflect on women-authored literature during meetings.
 2. CPW and VAZ express that they would love to do this.

b. WEN March 24th 9:30-11 at the CPL

- i. Roughly 20 people in attendance, surveyed the group to find out any feedback
- ii. Feedback suggests an educational component along with the networking session.
- iii. Next meeting: June 23rd at ClayTable
 1. VAZ asks for a flyer. SG says she will send more information on how to register.

c. Sexual Health & Pleasure after Menopause

- i. SG shares that this event was incredibly well attended – the room was packed and the discussions were fruitful and educational
- ii. The Commission asks for this to happen again and expresses excitement at being able educate the community on a truly important and oft-ignored subject
- iii. PW asks who presented. SG confirms that Cambridge Public Health

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presented and took anonymous questions.

iv. SG asks for help with marketing in the future.

d. Game Changers Camp

i. SG confirms that this is happening during the week of June 30 at the library.

e. Clothesline Project for SAAM 4/29

i. SG brings up this project done by the Domestic and Gender Based Violence Prevention Initiative at the City, as she felt it would be of interest to the Women's Commission.

8. Adjournment

a. Executive Director Shameka Gregory adjourned this meeting of the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women at 8:03.