CITY OF CAMBRIDGE | CCSW Women's Commission

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

Meeting Minutes – October 14, 2026

Present: Frehiwot Tesfaye, Joanna Elder, Caroline Palavicino-Maggio, Zaida Pingitore, MacKenzie Rawcliffe, Caroline Berz, Peter Hsu, Cheryl Hamlin,

Virtual: Bomy Lee Chung, Sweta Joshi, Vicky Mahfoud

Guest: Beth Halloran

Absent: Meg Bond, Diana Dumit, Ukpong Etteh

Staff: Zhiren Ye, Rachel Alexander

1. **Call to Order**
    a. Program Manager ZY called Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women to order at 6:33 PM
    b. Beth Halloran joined meeting.
    c. Hello & Check-In question – What's one of your favorite Fall traditions? Or something you're looking forward to this season?
2. **Vote to accept meeting minutes 9/9/26**
    a. Commissioner CB motioned to approve. Commissioner FT seconded it. The commission voted to accept the meeting minutes unanimously.
    b. Program Manager ZY announced accepted meeting minutes at 6:39 PM
3. **Group Agreements Reminder**
    a. Program Manager ZY presented agreements below.
    b. Listen with resilience
    c. Use "I" statements
    d. Honor confidentiality
    e. Room for multiple truths
    f. **Make space, take space**
    g. **Sit in complexity**
    h. **Posture of curiosity**
    i. **Assume best intent**

j. **Accept that there are multiple truths to every situation and story**
k. **Remember who we serve**

4. **Updates regarding reproductive justice house party.**
    a. Commissioner CB that shared Angel Foster from the MA Abortion project (MAP) joined with Reproductive Equity Now (REN) at her Reproductive Justice House party at her house. She shared that roughly 45 ppl attended. Commissioner CB shared news about MA House and Senate passing law to allow abortions until labor, passed with support of REN.
    b. Commissioner CH shared she hosted a reproductive house party as well.
    c. Commissioner BLC attended reproductive house party and shared about the speakers who talked about the struggle to get funding from wealthy donors in blue states, as donors often give more to red states.
5. **Self Defense Options discussion**
    a. Commissioner ZP shared about defense classes option in addition to IMPACT Boston. She expressed concerns about accessibility of classes, wishing the classes can be accessed by more people. She shared about the Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) class she took before. She liked the RAD curriculum. Commissioner ZP took it when she was twelve. She wants it to be a little different to meet everyone's needs, expressed interest in including older women and disabled women. Beth Halloran seconded the power of the RAD training. Found it empowered lots of women who took the class, specifically the roleplay aspect of fighting back.
    b. Program Manager Zhiren asked Commissioner ZP to share more about frequency and length. Commissioner ZP said it is 12 hours total spread over 2-3 days. Sliding scale of cost, suggested amount is $100. She shared that doing it after the workday would be preferable for students.
    c. Commissioner CB suggested it could be offered for one week during the Summer. She asked if the Cambridge Youth Centers (CYC) could include these concepts/trainings into their programs.
    d. Rachel Alexander shared that the Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative (DGBVPI) is currently working with CYC on healthy relationships training. She shared that this could potentially be incorporated or brought up to CYC. Program Manager ZY shared that the LGBTQ+ commission can also take part in the initiative to benefit non-binary and trans communities.
6. **50th Anniversary Planning (Appendix A)**
    a. Program Manager ZY introduced 50th anniversary planning section and shared each of the upcoming events in 2027, listed in Appendix A. He shared that the staff have planned out events for the next year so that they are spread out. Commissioners will now break into small working groups. These are not subcommittees but are just for idea generation. Conversation should focus on the needs of each event, and what needs to happen to execute the program. Program Manager ZY asked each commissioner to select which event they would like to work on.
    b. Commissioner CH picked reproductive justice.
    c. Commissioner PH picked reproductive justice.
    d. Commissioner CB picked reproductive justice.
    e. Rachel Alexander did reproductive justice.

f. Commissioner JE picked exploration of feminism.
g. Commissioner ZP picked exploration of feminism.
h. Commissioner FT picked exploration of feminism.
i. Commissioner MR picked banner raising.
j. Commissioner CPM picked banner raising.
k. Commissioner SJ picked banner raising.
l. Commissioner BLC and Beth Halloran picked living history tea.
m. Commissioner VM picked 50th anniversary Gala.
n. Program Manager ZY picked 50th anniversary Gala.

7. Share Out from Planning Groups

a. Banner Raising - March (Commissioner MR and Commissioner CPM).
    i. Commissioner MR shared many names of regular people who lead cool projects and did important things, who were women who lived in Cambridge and Cambridgeport specifically. She will make a spreadsheet to make sure we cover big age range of women represented in the banners. Want to choose some modern people, as well as highlight historical women that connect to present-day Cambridge life (EX: Woman who was a notable cyclist a while ago is relevant to women in Cambridge today and Cambridge Cycling Club).
    ii. Commissioner CPM shared that the same people in Cambridge are always highlighted. Want to choose people with small roles but large impact. Not just the elite and prominent members of society.
    iii. Commissioner MR expressed interest in making graphics/visuals for offering more information online of the women we highlight.
b. Explorations of feminism book club (Commissioner JE). See Appendix B, Exhibit 2.
    i. Commissioner JE shared that they talked about pulling readings from Substack, essays, Alice Walker, readings related to the term womanism, and Kimberlee Crenshaw. Plan to reach out to the library and women owned coffee shops to use their space. Program will involve getting together at coffee shop or library, and maybe at Harvard Art Gallery at the end. In-person but with virtual option. Will choose between who is available on CCSW to facilitate. Will distribute printed versions of the readings a week or two weeks beforehand. A series of 6 events total, including the last discussion. Commissioner JE shared that Commissioner MR mentioned the “Sojourner," a newspaper discontinued in 2002, run by a woman. Could include it in the programming.
c. Living history teas (Commissioner BLC and Beth Holloran). See Appendix B, Exhibit 1.
    i. Beth Halloran shared that 7 categories of living history teas were identified. 1) women who impacted design/art, 2) women lawmakers, 3) women activists, 4) women in STEM, 5) women journalists, 6) original member of CCSW, and 7) women Cambridge city planners. 5 teas might cover the range instead of 7.
    ii. Program Manager ZY shared ideas he and Executive Director Shameka Gregory talked about before including; many different types of “isms,” ecofeminism, womanism, feminism, etc. Good to think about what type of people are interested in each one. Who are we targeting to attend?
    iii. Commissioner JE shared that we could get Councillor Ayah Al-Zubi and

Representative Marjorie Decker for lawmakers, whereas journalists could be from CCTV and another on-air newswoman.

d. Reproductive justice event (Commissioner CH, Commissioner CB, Commissioner PH, and Rachel Alexander) See Appendix B, Exhibit 3.
    i. Commissioner CH shared that the group was first trying to understand scope of project, and talked about potential panelists. Thinking about political climate and how we don't know what it will be like next September. Should talk about politics no matter what and should talk about history around contraception at least briefly. Questions arose of whether to bring in what's happening in other countries. Everyone should leave with clear message. Would be good to talk about menopause. Program Manager ZY shared that CCSW hosted a menopause event last year. Including a global lens for the event could be valuable.
    ii. Commissioner MR asked what type of event it would be. Commissioner CH shared some form of talk with panelists and a Q and A. Shared there was discussion on whether there should be people tabling as well, for participants to have a chance to talk to them and walk around. Program Manager ZY shared Cambridge Health Alliance event had similar aspects.
    iii. Include MA legislation and funding as potential conversation topics

e. 50th anniversary gala (Program Manager ZY and Commissioner VM). See Appendix B, Exhibit 4.
    i. Program Manager ZY shared the ideas to have a photo exhibit of 50 women, 50 stories. Future room/booth: imagine the world 50 years from now. Immersive journey instead of just speeches. Local artists to perform. City manager/Mayor to come and speak. Commissioner VM shared it should be celebration and immersive space with visuals, not just sitting and listening to speeches. Commissioner MR shared her organization just had a gala and it was expensive. Asked what the budget it. Commissioner VM said it can be done on a low budget. Rachel Alexander shared some tasks can be done in-house to cut costs, such as printing.

8. Bylaws Review & Feedback (Appendix B)

a. Program Manager ZY shared the meeting is moving on to Bylaw review. Shoutout to Commissioner BLC and Commissioner DD who came up with the Bylaws edits.
b. Commissioner BLC shared most changes are stuff we've talked about in the last CCSW meeting. Instead of 4 people/chairs, doing 2 people/chairs. Can't remember if we decided on co-chairs or one main chair. No proxy voting, as it gets too complicated and talks too long. Questions about what counts as a reasonable number of excused absences. If there is an open spot, do we fill it or only fill it in specific circumstances?
c. Program Manager ZY shared other commissions do 3 excused absences. Gets complicated. What's reasonable grounds? Some last-minute reasons are reasonable, and some are not reasonable. Commissioner CPM shared it is helpful to have Summers off so that it's possible to balance personal and familial responsibilities. She serves on the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and benefits from the Summer break, as it is more accessible. Commissioner BLC shared that the CCSW only meets 12 times, so missing one is a lot.

d. Program Manager ZY shared an idea that after 3 times, staff offer meeting one-on-one with the Commissioner. Rachel Alexander shared that staff could meet with ppl if they are consecutively absent in a row and ask what they need and how they can show up to support CCSW. Commissioner CPM supported that idea, and shared that she appreciated the support she's received from staff regarding meeting attendance.
e. Commissioner BLC shared the Bylaws state that 10-20 people can be on the Commission max. What should be done if someone leaves? Program Manager ZY shared that the Commissioner could vote when the times comes on what to do if someone leaves early before their term. Commissioner PH expressed that it will likely be ok as there are plenty of members currently. Commissioner ZP asked if it is important logistically that there is a rule in the Bylaw regarding if someone leaves. Rachel Alexander shared that from her experience as a staff member it seems better for the Commissioners to have space to decide what to do in real time. Program Manager ZY reminded that all current Bylaws still have to go through law department. Commissioner BLC suggested that if there are less than 10 Commissioners, then we bring on more people.
f. Program Manager ZY gave a shoutout again to Commissioner BLC and Commissioner DD.
g. Commissioner MR asked if there is a shared workspace, like Google Drive, as she will be making a spreadsheet.
h. Program Manager ZY said staff will discuss and consider making Google Drive for the CCSW.

9. Other Business

a. Program Manager ZY adjourned the CCSW meeting at 7:57 PM.

Quote for the month:

"They didn't burn witches…they burned women who owned land, healed with herbs, and said no. They simply labeled women's rights as, "witchcraft".
Unknown

Appendix A

CCSW 50th Anniversary Celebration Events Overview

Please use the information below to build upon the specified event/initiative. All of the information we currently have including the vision/concept are detailed below as well as a rough calendar for the year.

January/February

Explorations of Feminism: A series of facilitated discussions based on readings of feminist literature from various perspectives. Essays and chapters of books seem like they would be more feasible for people to engage instead of full books.

Goal: To help people dive into and learn about different lenses of feminist thought including critiques to mainstream feminism.

Needs: Reading recommendations, facilitators, locations

March

Banner Raising: There are two aspects to this initiative. A collection of banners honoring women throughout Cambridge history placed on electrical poles around the city. Intention to include overlooked and everyday women as well. Includes a banner raising/reveal event to celebrate the initiative. This would be a full program with city Councilors, community members, city staff, etc.

Goal: To educate viewers on women in Cambridge's history and highlight/appreciate women people may not know of.

Needs: Who should we include on the banners? What are our criteria to select women for the banners? What is the structure of the reveal event? What do we want to include in the banner designs?

Additional information: Banners will be able to be up for a full year! From March 27 to March 28. Separate document highlights specific locations and suggested women thus far.

April

Oratorical Fest: Speech competition for students in grades 8-12 focused on students own writing or the writings of women and non-binary people.

Goal: To build key leadership skill of speech delivery of the next generation of leaders while helping them learn from feminist writers of the past.

Needs: How do we recruit participants? Anyone we can reach out to for possible scholarship opportunities? Desired judges?

Additional information: Library has been reserved for the following dates. 5:30pm - 8:30pm Thursday, April 8, 2027 , 5:00pm - 8:30pm Wednesday, April 7, 2027 , 10:00am - 2:00pm Saturday, April 10, 2027 Reached out to Harvard Sq. Business association and Central Sq BID to pitch idea to offer $1,000-$5,000 scholarships but no response yet. Library on board to support. Idea for winners to deliver their speech/poem at school committee meeting, city council meeting, and possibly state house.
Partnering with the library to help students find selections.

May/June

Living History Teas: Series of 5 teas allowing community members to engage with women who have made an impact on our community and beyond that are still living. Way of informal learning and sharing. Desire to host these at different locations that are meaningful to feminist history across the city.

Goal: To build communities connecting various generations and foster learning and exchange.
Needs: Recommendations of women and locations for the living history teas, conversation facilitators, location for conversation, tea <3
Additional Information

September
Reproductive Justice Event: Educational panel and vendor fair focused on women's reproductive health and the history of contraceptives. Panelists with different perspectives on women's health will share information, facts, stories, and perspectives. Potential topics include: Racist practices of contraceptives, access to agency over body, eastern medicinal practices in China and other non-Western countries, midwives, current anti-abortion movement, functional/homeopathic health options, etc. Before or after the panel there will be a fair of local health organizations (could include: Cambridge Naturals, Planned Parenthood, CHA, etc.).
Goal: Provide women's health resources and tools to participants. Offer information that empowers participants to ask questions and make the best choice available for their body.
Needs: Panelists, organizations to table, moderator, location.
Additional Information: Potential panelists could be: Dr. Tenrai Ota, Reproductive Health Access Project, Dr. Natasha Furtado Dalomba, Dr. Dorothy Roberts.

50th Anniversary Gala: Gala event honoring the 50th
Goal: Gala to celebrate the accomplishments of the Commission over the last 50 years and honor the participants and leaders.
Needs: What do we want to include in this event? Who do we wish to invite? Event flow?
Additional Information: Cambridgeside Galleria booked for Friday, Sept. 17. Shameka has a list of all previous Commissioners to draw from for the guest list.

Banner Raising Additional Information
Location and number of electrical poles available
Inman Square Area:
Hampshire Street Poles 34,36,38,41,43,48,49 **Total of 7**

Cambridge Street Pole
M80,M17,M192,M195,M200,M201,M208,M209,M211,M214,M216,M220 **Total 12**

Central Square: Between Hancock and Essex Street
Mass Ave Poles 80,82,84,90
½,91,87,83,M97,M102,M108,M105,M110,M113,M116,M125,M128 **Total 16**

Potential Women to Feature
From Ayanna Polk at the library

1. Olive Pierce (1925-2016). Documentary photographer and teacher at CRLS. I have a lot of information on her. Here's a link to her obituary: https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/06/02/olive-pierce-who-photographed-humanity-life-from-cambridge-maine-dies/jLM0Zx8peEnK81Nlb1fn1N/story.html
2. Caroline F. Orne and Almira Haywood – the first and second librarians for the Cambridge Public Library. Not sure if I have an image of Caroline Orne. I do have one of Almira Haywood. She died in the Library from a preventable fall.
3. Sumako Cohn – artist. (I'm not sure if she is still living though): https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/regionals/west/2014/04/30/brookline-artist-offers-paper-collage-images-her-japanese-homeland/pYnEJi6CdfH5EstgsPULSK/story.html
4. Louisa Solano – bookseller and owner of Grolier Poetry Bookshop: Collection: Louisa Solano Papers, 1956-2013 | Cambridge Room Collections
5. Dorothy Arnold – artist: Collection: Dorothy Arnold Art Journals, 1938-2010 | Cambridge Room Collections
6. Betsy Dunn – activist: Collection: Dunn, Betsy (Betsy Dunn Papers, 1968-1983) | Cambridge Room Collections and https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/wickedlocal-cambridgechronicle/name/elizabeth-dunn-obituary?id=9724327
7. Elizabeth G. A'Hearn-Dorety Conway - nurse : Collection: Elizabeth G. A'Hearn-Dorety Conway Papers, 1937-1948 | Cambridge Room Collections
8. Alice Ronchetti – Librarian: Collection: Alice M. Ronchetti Papers | Cambridge Room Collections
9. Mary Leno – photographer, collector of ephemera: bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=06d5aa3143755f0b5d1580a22d5181fdce35f82aa633e2cbeb9a680ca07ca890JmltdHM9MTc4OTYwMzIwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=05eefafa-5d52-60a0-0dac-eeb459526ef4&psq=mary+leno+obituary&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubGVnYWN5LmNvbS91cy9vYml0dWFyaWVzL2xlZ2FjeXJlbWVtYmVycy9tYXJ5LWxlbm8tb2JpdHVhcnk_aWQ9NTk0NTMyMDg&ntb=1
10. Evelyn Johnson Cardozo – Black Tuskegee Institute Instructor and Cambridge Community Center Board Member
11. Jennifer Regan – artist, feminist: https://thecambridgeroom.wordpress.com/2023/04/11/opening-reception-for-symbolism-and-subversion-an-exhibition-of-jennifer-regans-stitched-narratives/

I have collections of the women below but don't have ready information on them. Let's talk more about them if you are interested:

12. Elizabeth Fenton – poet
13. Takako Salvi Families – several generations of Black women

14. Sato Ambush Families – several generations of Black women
15. Elinor H. Terrile - nurse
16. Janet Murray - activist

These are women whose information is readily available elsewhere. I don't have these women's collections:

17. Vilot Casemear. Black property owner and Laundress. She purchased a 1 and a half story house at 248-350 Broadway in 1813. More info here: https://www.leventhalmap.org/articles/mapping-black-cambridge/. (You could use an image of her name in the census.)
18. Janet Axelrod (1951-2022). Library Trustee, Feminist, and Activist. Here's her obit: https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/janet-axelrod-obituary?id=32966241
19. Gertrude White Morgan – Black suffragist and civil rights advocate
20. Adina White – Black intellectual, artist, and business woman: https://mountauburn.org/notable-residents/adina-e-white-1861-1930/
21. Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins – Black author: https://historycambridge.org/articles/pauline-hopkins/
22. Black Trailblazers from the Cambridge Black History Project: https://cambridgeblackhistoryproject.org/trailblazers/. The website appears to be down right now as not all the Trailblazers are listed. They have featured some remarkable women. Do let me know if you decide to feature any of the Black Trailblazers as I will put you in touch with them as they will want to know and may require permission.

Another idea I had was for you to look through Sarah Boyer's oral history books for ideas of women to celebrate. You'd have to be sure they have passed away. These are her books:

- In our Own Words: Stories of North Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1900-1960
- All in the Same Boat: Twentieth-Century Stories of East Cambridge, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Crossroads: Stories of Central Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1912-2000
- We are the Port: Stories of place, perseverance, and pride in the Port/Area 4: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1845-2005

From Historical Commission
Womens_History_Month_Banners_2027.xlsx

Name	
Constance M. (Connie) Hilton	in first round of CCSW members (1978-
Eileen Henry (born Eileen B. Moore?	-Born Eileen Burckmeyer Moore on 1 Aug
Dr. Deborah Klein Walker	One of first members of Cambridge Comn
Norma Finkelstein, PhD	One of first members of Cambridge Comn
Jean DePasquale	One of first members of Cambridge Comn
Marjorie Bakken	Member CCSW 1981-1984?; Held many p
Catherine Queen (Catherine Irene Q	Sworn in to CCSW 1983; professional cosn
Joan Whitaker	Sworn in to CCSW 1983, vice chairperson
Donna Brescia	Sworn in to CCSW 1984: treasurer, event c
Darleen Gondola Bonislawski	Sworn in to CCSW 1985; lawyer, often pro

Former Executive Directors:
Beverly Smith (1979)
Kathleen "Kathy" Glynn (1980-1981)
Nancy Ryan (1981-2006)
Kimberly Sansoucy (2006-2025)

Appendix B

Exhibit 1, Living History Tea Notes taken by Commissioners.

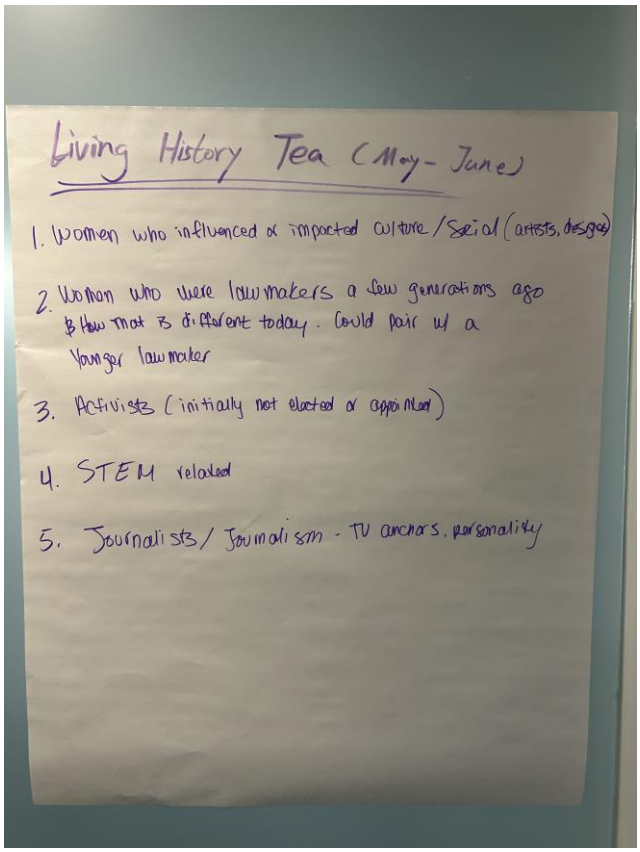


Exhibit 2, Explorations or feminism notes taken by Commissioners:

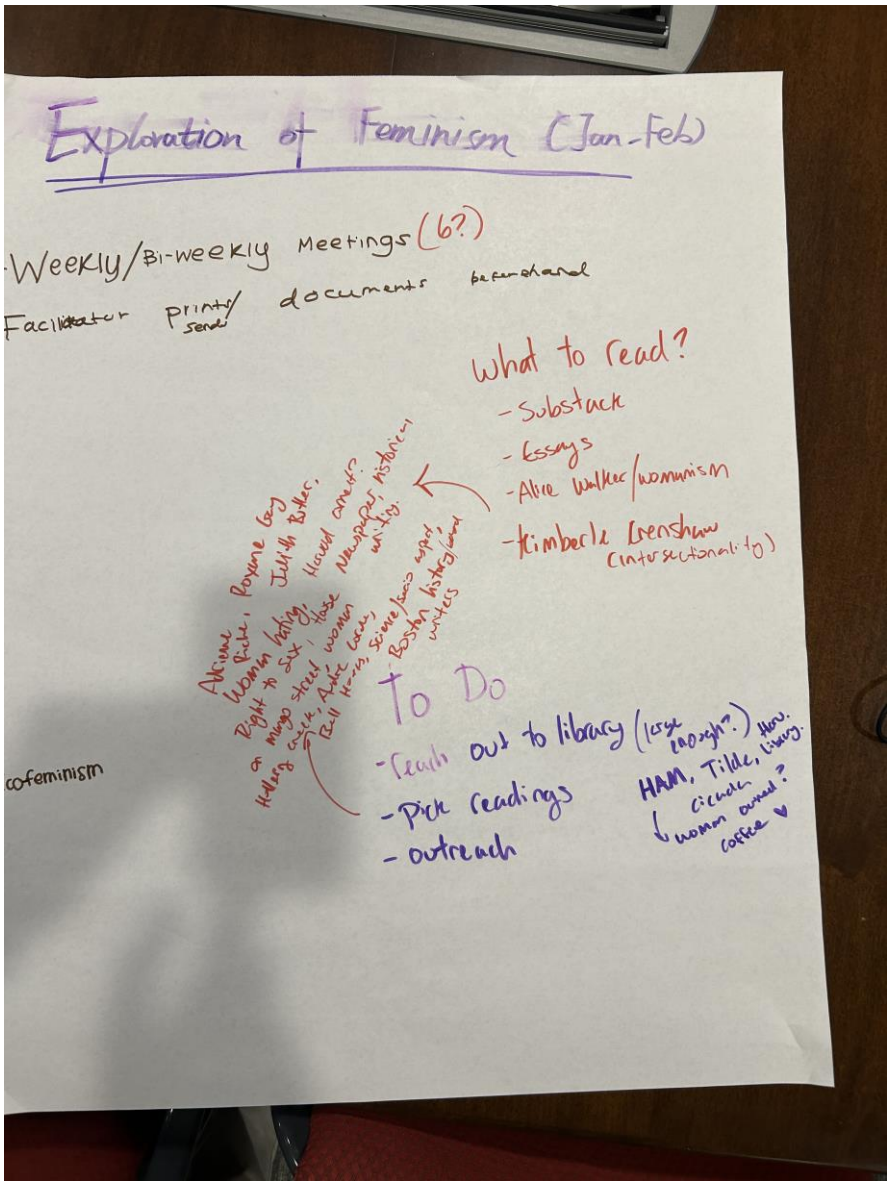


Exhibit 3, Reproductive justice event notes by Commissioners.

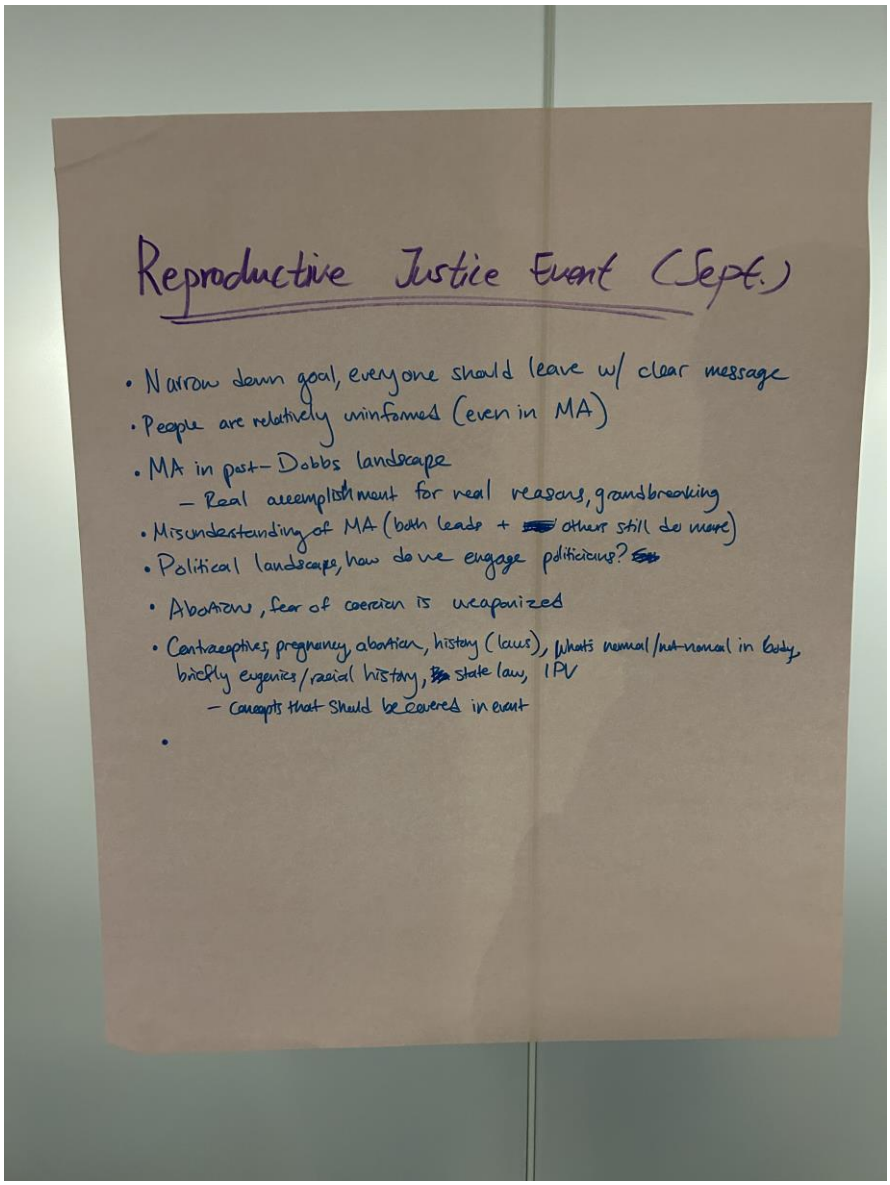
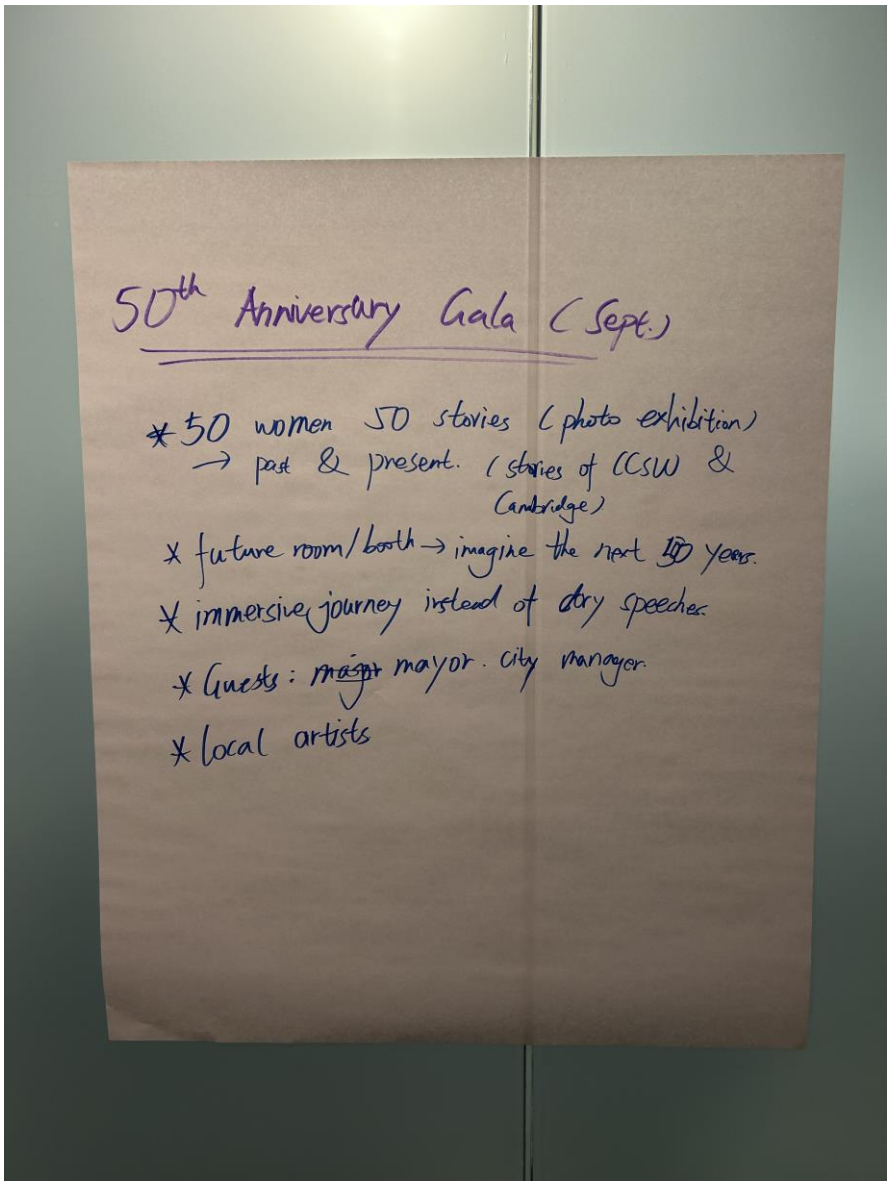


Exhibit 4, 50th anniversary gala notes taken by Commissioners.



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