

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

Meeting Minutes – September 9, 2026

Present: Bomy Lee Chung, Meg Bond, Frehiwot Tesfaye, Sweta Joshi, Ukpong Etteh, Joanna Elder, Caroline Palavicino-Maggio, Zaida Pingitore, Chryl Hamlin, Diana Dumit, Pauline Wells, MacKenzie Rawcliffe, Caroline Berz

Virtual: Peter Hsu, Vicky Mahfoud

Absent: Caroline Palavicino-Maggio

Guest: Mata Partenheimer

Staff: Shameka Gregory, Zhiren Ye

1. Call to Order

- a. Executive Director SG called this meeting of the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women to order at 6:00 PM
- b. Hello & Check-In question – What’s something that you did this summer that was re-energizing for you?

2. Vote to accept meeting minutes 7/8/26

- a. Commissioner MB motioned to approve, Commissioner BLC seconded. The commission voted to accept the meeting minutes unanimously.

3. Group Agreements Reminder

4. Executive Director SG presented the group agreements for commission to review. Commissioner MR asked about what to do if there is conflict. Executive Director SG explained that the group discussed this in July and decided that they would like conflict addressed at the table. Some may wish to do so immediately and some may need time to think things through but we are collectively committed to addressing conflict as it happens.
 - a. Listen with resilience
 - b. Use “I” statements
 - c. Honor confidentiality
 - d. Room for multiple truths

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

689 Massachusetts Ave.

Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 349 - 4697

- e. **Make space, take space**
- f. **Sit in complexity**
- g. **Posture of curiosity**
- h. **Assume best intent**
- i. **Accept that there are multiple truths to every situation and story**
- j. **Remember who we serve**

5. Review New Member Orientation Slides (Appendix A)

- a. Executive Director SG presented orientation slides and explained the details, emphasizing that the commission is an advocacy body for the Cambridge community.
- b. All commissioners have completed conflict of interest training.

6. 50th Anniversary Update

- a. Banners honoring women (Meta from Historical Commission)
 - i. Executive Director SG provided an overview: the banner raising initiative is in partnership with the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) and the Cambridge Public Library (CPL) are suggesting names to be mentioned on the banners. The idea is to organize one banner-raising ceremony with banners going up at different locations across Cambridge. There is an intentional effort to ensure that the banners represent all women particularly those that are usually overlooked.
 - ii. MP from CHC discussed with staff Rachel Alexander about highlighting women commission members from the 70s. They are currently accessing digital archives such as digitized newspaper, and compiling all documents showcasing women from all walks of life. MP suggested that CCSW can help with the research on women's history in Cambridge, in collaboration with staff from CPL.
 - iii. Executive Director SG will email the database and relevant information to the commission members. The project is expected to be finalized by March 2027. The design of the banners will be done or coordinated by the staff. The exact number of the banners will be determined by the electrical department.
 - iv. Commissioner CB suggested also displaying names of all featured women so people can see and learn, as well as connecting the banner-raising ceremony with relevant spaces and neighborhoods, such as at school where women first went. Commissioner JE also appreciated the idea and suggested idea of having a virtual museum to present these women and spaces.
 - v. Program Manager ZY mentioned about discovering photos of previous women commission from archive, which could be used for the project. Commissioner MB appreciated the idea and suggested working with CHC to make a digital map.
- b. Oratorical Fest in early April

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

689 Massachusetts Ave.

Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 349 - 4697

- i. Commissioner CB shared that the oratorical fest is designed for children from grades 8 to 12. The idea is to start from small scale this year and expand in the future. The initiative will be collaboration with the history and drama departments of the school, as well as the CPL.
 - ii. Executive Director SG further explained that the fest is a speech competition to foster youth's ability to deliver speech in public. And hopefully there will be scholarships offered by businesses. There is also thinking around having the winner deliver speech at city council or at the state house. The fest will take place in early April at the CPL, judges will be leaders from the community. The idea is to make it an annual event.
 - iii. Commissioner MR suggested promoting the event by asking businesses to republishing their women's speakers.
- c. Gala celebration at Cambridgeside Galleria. Need to select a date
 - i. The commission agreed to aim for September for the Gala.
 - ii. All former commissioners will be invited to the Gala to celebrate CCSW 50th anniversary.
- d. Living History Teas
 - i. The Living History Teas provides an opportunity to connect with older women in Cambridge to share their stories. The idea is to have 5 speakers to share at different locations such as the women center, library, birthing centers etc.
 - ii. Commissioner CB suggested making the banner, the living history tea and the Gala into a cohesive series and connecting the dots.
 - iii. Commissioner MR suggested collaboration with associations and different groups to amplify the impact.
- e. Event on reproductive justice
 - i. Staff RA would like to organize an event on reproductive justice, it could be a collaboration with the Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD). Commissioner UE mentioned that there was similar event at CPHD so there is an infrastructure to utilize.
 - ii. Commissioner DD suggested bringing in hospital members in this event to share different perspectives.
- f. Event on feminism/feminisms/womanism etc.
 - i. Executive Director SG suggested events that foster dialogues on the different schools and complexities within the feminist movement.
 - ii. Commissioner JE suggested the format of book clubs. Commissioner MR agreed, and mentioned that people feel more comfortable to share in smaller groups. There are suggestions to invite professors and authors to the book clubs and share.
- g. Girls in Sport Night
 - i. This is an initiative for girls and those who identify with girlhood to try out different sports at the War Memorial Center. Older high

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

689 Massachusetts Ave.

Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 349 - 4697

school athletes teach kids on different sports and they can sign up to participate. The positive impact on girls who are involved in sports is well documented. Supporting that impact and opportunity.

- h. Women in words.
- i. This is an informal conversational event on a specific topic. It is an informal way for women to bring and share ideas. It used to take place on a quarterly basis. Commission must decide whether they wish to continue while planning anniversary events as well.
- j. Women's Entrepreneurship Network
 - i. In partnership with CCD, there is quarterly networking and learning event for women entrepreneurs in Cambridge.

7. Elected Roles & Proposed Sub-Committees

- a. Executive Director SG recommend co-chairing model, allowing people to share workload. The role of the co-chairs is to set agenda alongside staff and based on previous minutes, facilitate the meeting and build the meeting flow. The co-chairs will meet with the staff each month to design the agenda. It's a power-sharing model.
- b. Commissioner DD mentioned preference for not having co-chairs, Commissioner CB agreed and suggested that the commission focus on subcommittees.
- c. Various commission members expressed difficulties in deciding on this matter as the commission has many new members. It is suggested to revisit this topic in January 2027.
- d. Commissioner BLC asked if the bylaws need to be updated. SG explained that the bylaws are outdated. Executive Director SG explained the differences between the ordinance and bylaws, and suggested to having a subcommittee to help update the bylaws. Commissioner BLC & DD volunteered to begin drafting bylaws to bring to Commission for edits and vote.
- e. Commissioner BLC suggested chair and vice-chair model instead to have clearer decision-making process.
- f. Commission will revisit this topic in January

8. Commissioners expressed their interest in supporting various events, shown as following:

- Banners: Commissioners MB, MR, SJ
- Events on feminism (book club): Commissioner MB, JE, CH, ZP, UE, FT, MR, PW
- Living History Teas: Commissioner MB, DD, SJ
- Reproductive Justice: Commissioner DD, CH, UE, CB, PW
- Bylaws update: Commissioner DD, BLC
- Oratorical fest: Commissioner JE, ZP, UE, CB, SJ
- 50th anniversary Gala: BLC, MR, PW

9. Drafted Ordinance Review

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

689 Massachusetts Ave.

Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 349 - 4697

- a. Executive Director SG presented slides on ordinance.
- b. Commissioner FT asked about who the last person is in appointing commissioners. Executive Director SG clarified that City Manager appoints Commissioners but they are approved by the Council and based on recommendations from staff and current Commissioners.
- c. Commissioner MB suggested a change to “City Manager’s decision with the advice from the commission staff and members”.
- d. Commissioner SJ suggested a change to “City Manager and Council’s final approval of the decision”.
- e. Commissioner MR suggested a change to “the commission may elect” (not shall elect)

10. Other Businesses

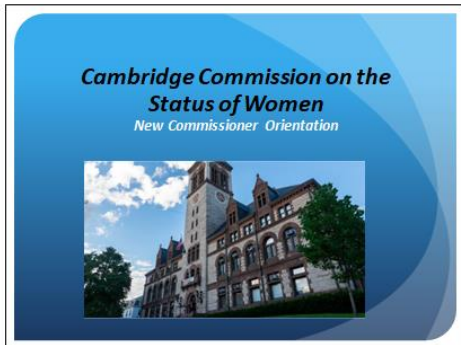
- a. Commissioner ZP mentioned about offering self-defense class. She asked if the city will provide space and time so the classes can be offered for wider audience for free.
- b. Executive Director SG mentioned that Impact Boston is offering some classes, and will get back to the commission to see if a series of classes can be offered including the self-defense class.

11. Adjournment

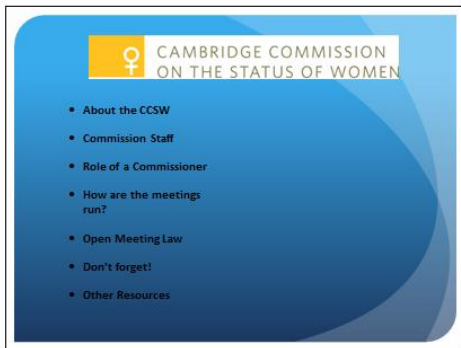
- a. Executive Director SG adjourned the meeting at 8:09 PM.

Appendix A- New Commissioner Orientation Slides

9/17/2026



1



2

1

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women
689 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 349 - 4697

Commission Staff



- Shameka Gregory | she/her, Executive Director, sgregory@cambridgema.gov
- Zhiren Ye | he/they, Program Manager, zye@cambridgema.gov

3

About the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

- The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women was established under Chapter 2.88 of the Cambridge Municipal Code.
- The Commission is an Advisory Commission, whose role is to act as a centralizing force dealing with all women's issues by providing information, referral, guidance, coordination, and providing technical assistance.
- The Commission also promotes policies and practices that have a positive effect on the health, welfare, and safety of women who live, work, go to school, and visit Cambridge.
- Commissioners are expected to be knowledgeable about the rights and needs of women and must live in Cambridge.
- The Commission is comprised of up to 20 volunteer Commissioners.

Role of a Commissioner

- Commissioners serve for 3-year terms.
- The Commission meets 11 times a year, every month except August, currently on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, from 6:30 – 8:00 PM. The Commission meets hybrid (Large Conference Room on the 2nd Floor of 689 Mass. Ave. or virtually).
- Commissioners shall inform CCSW staff and the chairs if they will (or will not) be attending the meeting.
- Commissioners are expected to:
 - Attend monthly meetings,
 - Participate and volunteer for outreach and other community events,
 - Promote the principals of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and
 - Work with Commission staff for the betterment of Cambridge.

5

How are the meetings run?

- Before every meeting you will be given the following:
 - An agenda of items to be discussed.
 - Minutes, which summarize matters discussed at the previous meeting.
- A chair will "call the meeting to order" to begin the meeting. The time will be noted.
- Every public meeting needs a quorum. A quorum is when you have a majority of the membership of Commissioners present in order to officially hold the meeting. If we do not have quorum, meetings are cancelled or immediately stopped.

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women
 689 Massachusetts Ave.
 Cambridge, MA 02139
 (617) 349 - 4697

Don't Forget!

- If you ever want to bring up new ideas or events for discussion at a future meeting, email the chairs, Executive Director, and Program Manager to put the item(s) on the agenda for the next meeting.
- **Never** hold a meeting among Commissioners or discuss important content within the scope of the Commission's work, outside of the public meeting, especially via email "reply all" responses to all Commissioners.

9

How are the meetings run?

- In order to approve certain events or new projects, the chair will say: "is there a motion to approve?" then a *Commissioner needs to raise their hand and say "so moved"* and another *Commissioner needs to second the motion*. The Chair will call for "all those in favor" to which remaining Commissioners can vote assent (yes) or deny assent (no). A record of the votes will be noted, if not unanimous.
- Throughout the meeting, new business will be discussed as well as other items on the agenda.
- In order to end the meeting, the co-chair will say "motion to adjourn?" A *Commissioner needs to raise their hand to motion*, and another *Commissioner needs to second the motion*. The time of adjournment is noted. Meetings are automatically adjourned if quorum is lost.

7

Resources

- **AGO - Open Meeting Law:**
<https://www.mass.gov/the-open-meeting-law>
- **CCSW Website: Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women**

10

AGO Open Meeting Laws

Open Meeting Law regulations are established by the MA Attorney General to make sure Commissioners representing the public hold their meetings in public.

- A quorum of a public body cannot deliberate except in a public meeting for which sufficient notice has been posted.
- The Open Meeting Law defines deliberation as "an oral or written communication through **any** medium, including electronic mail, between or among a quorum of a public body on any public business within its jurisdiction."

8

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women

689 Massachusetts Ave.

Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 349 - 4697