



## Regular Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

**Present:** Co-Chair Jen Sparks, Commissioners Tsamchoe Dolma, Ashebir Gezmu, Karin Lin, Joe Manok, and Karim Razzaz

CIRC Staff: Executive Director Jennifer Mathews, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa

**Absent:** Co-Chair Abhishek Raman, Commissioners Anna Mejia, Eva Gottschalk, Subandha Karmacharya, Aleksandra Ibrahim, and Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

### 1. Call to order

Co-Chair Sparks called the meeting to order at 6:11 pm.

### 2. Public comment

No public was present at the start of the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

### 3. Review and approval of January 25, 2022 minutes

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the January 25, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Lin moved to approve the meeting minutes, and Commissioner Razzaz seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

### 4. Staff Updates

#### Cambridge De Novo Legal Screening Clinic

Executive Director (ED) Mathews reported that 14 clients called the virtual clinic in February, less than the usual number, but similar to January. A member of the Commission asked about when the legal clinic would return to being in person. ED Mathews explained that in January De Novo started to bring staff back into the building but with the Omicron variant staff needed to continue working from home. The City is renewing the agreement with De Novo to continue the legal clinic. Ultimately, it is up to De Novo to decide what it feels safe doing for their employees and clients. ED Mathews will follow up with De Novo and update the Commission.

#### KYR with the Central Square Public Library

ED Mathews announced the date for the Central Square Library “Know Your Rights.” The event is scheduled for April 13, 2022 from 6-7:30 p.m. and will be conducted virtually on Zoom.

#### New Resident Overview

ED Mathews highlighted the additions to the New Resident Overview based on the suggestions provided at the previous meeting. Commissioners gave additional suggestions for the New Resident Guide to include resources for LGBTQ youth and information about the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee nonprofit. Commissioner Razzaz explained that with his work in the community he has connected with new arrivals. Commissioner Razzaz stated that it has been difficult to get accurate information about a person’s age. The guide will be online and printed.

#### Work and Family Mobility Act

ED Mathews announced that The Work and Family Mobility Act was passed by the Massachusetts House of Representatives. If enacted, the bill would enable all qualified state residents to apply for a standard Massachusetts driver’s license, regardless of immigrant status, while keeping our Commonwealth in full compliance with REAL ID requirements.

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

Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto was unable to attend the meeting. ISL Wabeto will provide updates about new initiatives happening in Cambridge at the next meeting.

#### **5. Commission Working Groups Follow-Up Discussion**

Commissioners have been trying to establish a small planning/strategy-focused working group. Commissioner Manok explained there was an issue with scheduling, but he will send out a Doodle to arrange a meeting. The members who volunteered to join Co-Chair Raman in the working group are Commissioners Razzaz, Gottschalk, Manok, and Lin. The working group will report next month after they meet.

#### **6. Open Discussion**

Commissioner Razzaz discussed issues regarding language barriers experienced by recent Afghan arrivals he is working to connect with jobs and other resources. According to Commissioner Razzaz, some people are having difficulty navigating the transportation signs on the T. Others find it difficult to communicate with colleagues while at work because of varying language skills.

Commissioner Dolma summarized her experience participating in the Commission Townhall for the City Manager Search. According to Commissioner Dolma, there were 27 representatives from other commissions in the City. Some of the themes discussed during the Townhall were about the City providing more support to the administrative staff because the staff is overextended, volunteers wanting recognition for their service, and their interest in evaluating budgets for City commissions.

#### **7. Plain Language CET Event**

Project Coordinator (PC) Rosa presented at the Community Engagement Team Networking Event on Language Justice: Plain Language Best Practices. Over 200 representatives of Cambridge service providers registered for the event and 177 attended the event. There was an outpouring of support for the work and multiple requests received for additional presentations by departments in the City.

Commissioner Manok moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:52 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Razzaz. Adjournment was approved unanimously.

**The next commission meeting will be on Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at 6 pm via Virtual Zoom meeting.**