

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE  
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 2023**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Kathleen Born, Chair  
Kaleb Abebe  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo  
Mosammat Faria Afreen  
Nikolas Bowie  
Kevin Chen  
Max Clermont  
Jennifer Gilbert  
Kai Long  
Patrick Magee  
Mina Makarious  
Lisa Peterson  
Ellen Shachter  
Susan Shell  
Jim Stockard

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30p.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via zoom.

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

**Kaleb Abebe – Absent**  
**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Present**  
**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Present**  
**Nikolas Bowie – Absent**  
**Kevin Chen – Present**  
**Max Clermont – Present**  
**Jennifer Gilbert – Present**  
**Kai Long – Present**  
**Patrick Magee – Present**  
**Mina Makarious – Present**  
**Lisa Peterson – Present**  
**Ellen Shachter – Present**  
**Susan Shell – Present**  
**Jim Stockard – Absent**  
**Kathleen Born – Present**  
**Present – 12, Absent – 3. Quorum established.**

**The Chair, Katleen Born recognized member Kevin Chen who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from February 7, 2023 and Subcommittee meeting minutes from January 27, 2023. The motion was seconded by member Kai Long.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

**Kaleb Abebe – Absent**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes**

**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes**

**Nikolas Bowie -Absent**

**Kevin Chen – Yes**

**Max Clermont – Yes**

**Jennifer Gilbert – Yes**

**Kai Long – Yes**

**Patrick Magee – Yes**

**Mina Makarious – Yes**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – Yes**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Absent**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent 3. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Lisa Peterson who made a motion to adopt and place on file one written communication received from the public (Attachment A). The motion was seconded by member Patrick Magee.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

**Kaleb Abebe – Absent**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes**

**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes**

**Nikolas Bowie – Absent**

**Kevin Chen – Yes**

**Max Clermont – Yes**

**Jennifer Gilbert – Yes**

**Kai Long – Yes**

**Patrick Magee – Yes**

**Mina Makarious – Yes**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – Yes**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Absent**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent -3. Motion passed.**

Anna Corning, Project Manager, shared that she would like to hear opinions on the proposed timeline (Attachment B) and adopt it at the meeting. She noted that she tried to incorporate the two main items she heard as feedback from members, which included dedicated time to review drafted charter text, and dedicated time slots for topic-specific public forums. Anna noted that the plan would be to propose this timeline to the Council at the meeting being held on March 22 with the understanding that the Charter Review Committee would ask for an extension through the end of the year. Anna opened discussion to members about edits and concerns around the proposed timeline.

Member Ellen Shachter had a clarifying question around summer meetings and the possibility of some members being away on vacation. She noted the importance of making sure there is a quorum for summer meetings so the Committee is able to meet. Anna Corning noted that there will be a summer break where meetings will not be held and shared she would be reaching out to members to confirm their availability.

Member Susan Shell had a clarifying question on how the timeline would be affected by an extension and what it looks like moving forward. Anna Corning noted that the timeline is the framework behind asking for the extension with the goal being to discuss the extension at the City Council Special meeting on March 22, and shared that the timeline currently goes to mid-November, and members should think about if they are able to continue to make a commitment to participate.

The Chair, Kathleen Born shared that it would be good to end in November because it is an election year and it would be good to have the current City Council members present when the new Charter Review language is complete and ready to be submitted. The Chair encouraged members to look at the proposed timeline so they have a good idea of what will be happening in the upcoming months and future meetings.

Member Kai Long offered comments and positive feedback around the proposed timeline and is in favor of moving forward with it, and believes November is a good end date.

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Ellen Shachter who made a motion to adopt the proposed timeline. Member Patrick Magee seconded the motion.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

**Kaleb Abebe – Absent**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes**

**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes**

**Nikolas Bowie – Absent**

**Kevin Chen – Yes**

**Max Clermont – Yes**

**Jennifer Gilbert – Yes**

**Kai Long – Yes**

**Patrick Magee – Yes**

**Mina Makarious – Yes**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – Yes**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Absent**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.**

The Chair, Kathleen Born reminded Committee members of the Special City Council meeting being held on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and encouraged some members to join in the meeting, but also stressed the importance that Charter Review Committee members that do attend have to be less than seven to stay away from a quorum.

Anna Corning introduced City Manager Yi-An Huang who thanked the Committee for inviting him to join the meeting. The City Manager offered opening remarks about his transition from his previous employment to his current role as City Manager, and shared his background on what led him to become a City Manager. He shared that he recognized the opportunity to come into the City to build off of things that are already strong, and work towards strengthening areas in the City where it was needed. The City Manager noted that he believes the conversation with the Charter Review Committee is very important, and he is excited and happy to share what he has learned, seen, and experienced since taking the role of City Manager.

Member Kevin Chen began by asking the City Manager if there were a Mayor position that had been opened with the City, is that something he would have applied for. The City Manager shared that he would not have applied for a political role like that, he does enjoy reading about politics, but does not see himself as a politician. The City Manager noted that what excites him about the role of City Manager is being able to build a strong organization and a culture where he is able get things done.

Member Ellen Shachter offered comments and asked the City Manager what he believes is the appropriate interface with the people in the community and the position of City Manager. The City Manager responded by sharing he believes that it is very important to have all levels of engagement within the community and noted that there is always room for improvement on how the City continues to be accessible, engaging, and receiving feedback.

Member Susan Shell had a question for the City Manager regarding his relationship with the City Council around legislation and also questioned how the City Manager, within his own office, sets up the various divisions and demands and prioritizes what needs get met with first. The City Manager began by noting that it is a unique governing structure. He shared that he believes the Councillors got into their roles because they wanted to make an impact and shape their community. He noted he believes his role when he is working with the Councillors is to try and come to a consensus and shape policy together through dialogue, even when everyone is coming from different perspectives, and achieve those positive impacts for the City together.

Organizationally within his Office he aspires to have short term plans where his team can see what they are working on currently and how it will impact decisions going forward to make long term investments. He noted that the Councillors exercise a great deal of power and influence on the City Manager, which is applied over time, and noted how affordable housing is a great example of that.

Member Kai Long questioned the City Manager on how much in his job description is engaging with the public or how much within the perimeter of the job would be with the public. The City Manager responded by sharing that it was the responsibility of the Council to hire someone who they believed would be beneficial towards the City in all aspects, including community engagement. He shared that when he came into the position, he had the desire of setting up structures that have not been in place, with an example being the City Manager annual review. He commented that he worked with the City Council to create the review, which had just been finalized, and it offers the opportunity to achieve goal setting and feedback from the community and other City Departments. Kai Long had a clarifying question regarding the review and was interested in knowing if the review were something that would continue to apply once City Manager Huang is no longer in the role of City Manager. The City Manager responded by sharing that it could be something that becomes permanent but should be flexible as time changes and the City evolves.

Member Lisa Peterson asked the City Manager if he was able to provide specific recommendations that members in the Committee could think about to try and change Charter language to accomplish more public participation. The City Manager noted that there are some larger challenges the City is trying to solve and recognized that more public representation, participation, and engagement is important.

Member Jennifer Gilbert offered questions around issues that are more regional and national, and asked how, with our current form of government, where does the City stand with other cities and towns, and how does Cambridge contribute to some of these major issues like climate change, housing, and transportation. The City Manager offered comments, noting that it is understood that regionally that these are issues that need to be collaborative on.

Member Patrick Magee had questions around the amount of Awaiting Reports that are on the weekly Council Agenda and suggested that when City Councillors are elected, they try to set their policy setting earlier in their term. Patrick Magee shared that by doing this it would help to set the stage and allow staff to know and focus on what the two year term would look like. He offered additional comments and asked for the City Manager's view on a suggestion like this. The City Manager shared that there should be a goal setting exercise between the City Council and the City, which has been missing. He shared that this year the City and the City Councillors will plan out what that goal setting looks like moving forward. The City Manager agreed with Patrick Magee and believes that there is a need to be clearer about overall direction, and where the staff time and efforts need to be focused.

Member Mina Makarios asked the City Manager from his perspective, or anything he has heard from the City Council, on what the Charter Review Committee should be working towards to help the Council function better as an advisory board. The City Manager noted that ultimately the Councillors are held accountable by the voters. He shared that having a more citizen base that are working with Councillors and paying attention to legislation could be beneficial moving forward. The City Manager offered additional comments and noted that he enjoys working with each Councillor and getting different perspectives from them when making decisions.

Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo submitted questions to the City Manager and was unable to speak during the meeting. Member Acevedo wanted to know what the City Manager's leadership style was, what is the most difficult part of your role, how are you ensuring policy and legislation based on social media, and how are we supporting the BPOC and small businesses in our city to remain in the city from your position and lens post-COVID and ARPA rollout. The City Manager shared that he focuses on trying to assemble a good team that will focus on tackling an issue, and he is trying to look at and build into the City a diverse group of people. The City Manager noted that when involving groups of people, he wants to make sure they feel free to speak and have input, and that they are listened to when they do speak.

Member Ellen Schachter had clarifying questions around decisions that come down to risk and the ability to take risks, noting that it is critical to take risks in order to go forward, and asked where does risk fit into the role of City Manager. The City Manager noted that there are many risks that come with his role, sharing that there are a lot of different risks and at the end of the day there should be an assessment of what type of risk you are taking and looking at the different scenarios with that risk, the impact, and the reward.

The Chair, Kathleen Born thanked the City Manager for taking time to be with the Charter Review Committee around a clearer mission for the Mayor, which is something the Charter Review might accomplish by deciding if they go with directly electing a Mayor through rank choice voting. The Chair, Kathleen Born asked for the City Manager's thoughts around the possibility of the Mayor having a different role with establishing priorities. The City Manager noted that there is some value in having a different role for the Mayor, sharing that it could be more attractive to voters.

Anna Corning thanked City Manager Huang for participating the Charter Review meeting and making himself available to answer questions and be open to discussion. The City Manager thanked all the Charter Review Committee members and thanked them for the important work they are doing.

Anna Corning reminded members that the goal is to meet a working consensus on the form of government topic by the end of the next meeting and asked members to submit any questions or concerns they had around the topic to help them reach the goal of getting to a consensus.

Member Jennifer Gilbert shared their concerns around the discussion about the form of government and noted it should be thorough and thought out on how members engage in discussion on the topic of form of government. Anna Corning suggested she can brainstorm with The Chair and the Collins Center to help break down the questions and frame them into building block questions that will help get to a decision in a thoughtful way.

The Chair, Kathleen Born offered her concerns around the decision of form of government and noted she had relistened to some of the interviews and meetings that were conducted throughout the last few months to help with her thought process.

Member Mina Makarious agreed with the Chair about her concerns. They shared that learning about the different leadership styles has been beneficial and wants to make sure that the

Committee is conscious of the option to not make any changes to the overall form of government in the decision making process.

Anna Corning introduced Elizabeth Corbo and Michael Ward from the Collins Center who gave a review of their memo (Attachment C) which was a menu of forms of government with example options for modifications. Members from the Committee shared their questions and concerns around the memo and the team from the Collins Center made themselves available to respond.

**The Chair, Kathleen Born extended the meeting by fifteen minutes. Members of the Committee agreed to the extension. No roll call was taken.**

Members of the Charter Review Committee, the team from the Collins Center, and Anna Corning continued their discussion around the memo. Many members of the Charter Review offered clarifying questions around the memo and the team from the Collins Center and Anna Corning were available to provide more detail and examples around the questions.

Anna Corning thanked members from the Charter Review for their thoughtful questions and discussions during the meeting.

**The Charter Review Committee adjourned at approximately 7:50p.m.**

Attachment A – Written Communication from a member of the public.

Attachment B – Adopted Project Timeline

Attachment C – Memorandum from the Collins Center to the Charter Review Committee

**Clerk's Note:** The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/462?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=92987b32666239a03ed7d617bcfad620](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/462?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=92987b32666239a03ed7d617bcfad620)