

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE  
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 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 Makarios  
Lisa Peterson  
Ellen Shachter  
Susan Shell  
Jim Stockard

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, April 11, 2023. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30p.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via Zoom.

**At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

**Kaleb Abebe – Present  
Jessican DeJesus Acevedo – Present  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Present  
Nikolas Bowie – Present  
Kevin Chen – Present  
Max Clermont – Present  
Jennifer Gilbert – Present  
Kai Long – Present  
Patrick Magee – Present  
Mina Makarios – Present  
Lisa Peterson – Present  
Ellen Shachter – Present  
Susan Shell – Present  
Jim Stockard – Present  
Kathleen Born – Present  
Present – 15, Absent – 0. Quorum established.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Lisa Peterson who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from March 29, 2023. The motion was seconded by member Kevin Chen.**

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

**Kaleb Abebe – Yes**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes**

**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes**

**Nikolas Bowie – Yes**

**Kevin Chen – Yes**

**Max Clermont – Yes**

**Jennifer Gilbert – Yes**

**Kai Long – Yes**

**Patrick Magee – Yes**

**Mina Makarious – Yes**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – Present**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Yes**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 14, No – 0, Present – 1. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Jim Stockard who made motion to accept and place on file fifteen communications received from the public. The motion was seconded by member Mosammat Faria Afreen.**

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

**Kaleb Abebe – Yes**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes**

**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes**

**Nikolas Bowie – Yes**

**Kevin Chen – Yes**

**Max Clermont – Yes**

**Jennifer Gilbert – Yes**

**Kai Long – Yes**

**Patrick Magee – Yes**

**Mina Makarious – Yes**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – Present**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Yes**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 15, No – 0. Motion passed.**

### **The Chair, Kathleen Born opened public comment.**

Valerie Bonds shared that they do not believe the City Council is ready for a four-year term and noted that the City Manager is a public servant who is responsible and accountable to the people only, where the City Council is accountable to the voters.

Charles Henebry shared that they are in favor of at large districts and believes it is good for proportional representation.

Gleb Bahmutov spoke in support of keeping rank choice voting and at large City Councillors.

James Zall encouraged the Committee to keep the at large status of the Cambridge City Council.

Dazhong Xia shared that they support at large City Council because they make decisions that reflect the entire City rather than geographic areas.

James Williamson suggested ways the City could be better at allowing the public to participate in Charter Review Committee meetings on the website. They shared that they support an elected Mayor and shared their experience with a City Manager form of government.

Stephen C. shared they were in support of a strong Mayor form of government and believes that a Manager and a Mayor would be equally accountable or unaccountable.

Marie Saccoccio shared that they were in favor of keeping two-year terms for the City Council and would like to see the Plan E Charter retained.

Pio Szamel suggested that the Charter Review Committee review how votes are cast for at large seats.

Heather Hoffman offered comments on government and shared that it is hard to find people to run to be an elected official and the residents and voters need to remain involved, otherwise there would be no accountability.

Jameson Quinn offered comments around staggered Council terms and suggestions on rank choice ballot voting.

Kai Long shared that it would be important to create and collect the data that is being submitted from communications to help the Committee have a better understanding of what the residents are saying. Anna Corning, Project Manager, shared that she would be happy to start tallying and creating an overall summary of the opinions and information that is being received from the public.

Anna Corning, Project Manager, noted that they are in the process of creating an online survey with members Lisa Peterson and Jennifer Gilbert as well as Chair Born. Anna Corning shared that the survey could have polls or open-ended questions for residents to respond to. Chair Born noted that the idea of the survey came from the City Council at the Special City Council meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Members of the Charter Review Committee discussed and shared concerns around conducting a survey within the community regarding the form of government and matters related to it. Anna Corning noted that it is important for Committee members to share their suggestions and ideas for surveying, so the Committee can execute the survey to get the best outcome possible. Anna shared that there can be more than one way a survey is done.

Elizabeth Corbo from the Collins Center noted that conducting this survey will not be the last opportunity to receive feedback from the public and reviewed what the process will look like in the future for the Committee moving forward and shared that there will be several more instances where input will be gathered from the public.

Anna Corning shared that they would like to transition the topic of discussion to form of government and have Committee members share their thoughts.

Member Ellen Shachter shared that they would like to see a system that has a combination of a Mayor and a Chief Administrative and Finance Officer (CAFO). They noted that in their experience, they have seen more accountability with a Mayor.

Kai Long shared that they worry about having a strong Mayor and the accountability between the Mayor and City Council that would be involved and how they would be able to work together.

Mina Makarious shared that they are leaning closer to a City Manager form of government and noted that a strong Mayor with a CAFO could work if the Mayor's position would not have complete power and the possibility of making decisions with the Council.

Nikolas Bowie shared they support a strong Mayor system and likes the idea of having a CAFO. They stressed the importance that whoever sets the budget for the City should be accountable to the voters.

Jim Stockard shared that they are in favor of City Manager form of government and he likes the idea that the City Manager can stay away from campaigning and elections. Jim Stockard noted that they would like the City Council to have a leader within the Council that is elected to advocate for good policies to benefit the City.

Lisa Peterson noted that they are in favor of the City Manager form of government, and shared that a good City Manager tries to balance the interests of people across the City. They shared that if the Committee went with a strong Mayor it would be important to have an elected CAFO and for the Council to have more authority around the budget.

Susan Shell shared that they were in favor of a strong Mayor with a CAFO and that the budget should be overseen by elected officials.

Mosammat Faria Afreen shared that they were leaning toward having a strong Mayor form of government due to the potential of increasing voter turnout and noted it was important to have a strong public figure in Cambridge in terms of infrastructure and having a larger say with the budget.

Kaleb Abebe offered comments around form of government and shared they were in favor of keeping the current form of government.

Kathleen Born noted that a strong elected official is the best way for the City to have a future. The Chair noted that the City is stuck right now and it would benefit the City to have someone come in with a vision for the future and provide answers on how to get there.

Kevin Chen offered comments around the budget and noted that with a strong Mayor system, decisions around the budget could be different. They shared that they agree with the Chair about lack of leadership in the City and would support a strong Mayor system with a CAFO role in place.

Jennifer Gilbert shared that they support a strong Mayor form of government because it is a way for the City to create leadership and prioritize the City. They shared that a Mayor is someone that would be more accountable to lead the City in the future.

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo shared that they believe the City is going towards the direction of change, but is concerned with having a strong Mayor form of government. They shared they would like to look more into how the City Council can be improved and noted it would be important to help increase the number of minorities who are represented in the City, and shared that with a strong Mayor it would not be a full representation of citizens.

Patrick Magee shared that they support a City Manager - Council form of government and offered comments on the budget, noting that the past City Managers have not been able to accomplish what they have with regards to the budget without the push from the City Council.

Max Clermont shared that they are leaning towards City Manager form of government and agrees with comments made by Jim Stockard.

**The meeting was extended thirty minutes by the Chair, Kathleen Born. No vote was taken.**

The Charter Review Committee continued their discussion on the form of government and members offered concerns and suggestions around strong Mayor versus City Manager. Anna Corning suggested that members go around and share what side they were leaning towards.

**The Charter Review Committee adjourned at approximately 7:57p.m.**

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record.

The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/481?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=8db2b148ca769c0a979e9f579e4e1cab](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/481?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=8db2b148ca769c0a979e9f579e4e1cab)