CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ AGENDA ~

Tuesday, May 9, 2023	**5:30 PM**	**Remote Meeting**

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

A communication was received from Anna Corning, Charter Review Project Manager, transmitting the Agenda for the May 9, 2023 Committee meeting.

A communication was received from Anna Corning, Charter Review Project Manager, transmitting the Agenda Packet for the May 9, 2023 Committee meeting.

City of Cambridge

(ID # 19348)
IN CITY COUNCIL
May 9, 2023

A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

May 9, 2023, @ 5:30 p.m.
REMOTE ONLY – VIA ZOOM

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation at meetings of the Cambridge Charter Review Committee.

The zoom link is: https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/83253118929
Meeting ID: 832 5311 8929
One tap mobile +13092053325,,83253118929# US

Agenda Items – Tuesday, May 9, 2023

I. Roll Call 5:30 PM

II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born

III. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from the meeting of April 11, 2023, and April 25th, 2023
pg. 3-10

IV. Meeting Materials Submitted to the Committee to be placed on file
- Communications from Committee Members
- Communications from Council Members
- Communications from the Public
  - *i.* A communication was received from Michael Whelan, regarding support for an At-Large City Council using Ranked Choice Voting.
    pg. 11
  - *ii.* A communication was received from Wyatt Berlinic, regarding opposition to a ward-based representation system
    pg. 12
  - *iii.* A communication was received from Vivek Sikri, regarding opposition to a ward-based representation system
    pg. 13
  - *iv.* A communication was received from Christopher Cassa, regarding support for At-Large representation
    pg. 14-15
  - *v.* A communication was received from Esther Hanig, regarding support for a strong mayor system and opposition to ward-based representation
    pg. 16
  - *vi.* A communication was received from Dan Phillips (on behalf of ABC), regarding support of At-Large representation

pg. 17-18

vii. A communication was received from Camilla Elvis, regarding opposition to ward-based representation
pg. 19

viii. A communication was received from Ben Simon, regarding support for a strong mayor model
pg. 20

ix. A communication was received from Susan Fleischmann, regarding support for a city manager form of government
pg. 21-22

x. A communication was received from Barbara Anthony, regarding eliminating the proportional voting system, support for district-based councilors, and a strong mayor form of government
pg. 23-24

xi. A communication was received from Young Kim, regarding support for a government oversight office and accountability
pg. 25-26

xii. A communication was received from Dan Tenney, regarding AHO2 proposal
pg. 27

xiii. A communication was received from Ausra Kubilius, regarding transparency and accountability
pg. 28

- Other Meeting Materials

V. Public Comment
- Members of the public are invited to share their ideas or comments with the committee.

VI. Review Decision Making Threshold
- What is the threshold the committee is comfortable with to move forward on decisions? Options include but are not limited to a simple majority or ⅔.

VII. Review Key Decisions and Provisions under the two forms of government
- **Facilitator**: Libby, Mike, and Anna **Goal:** Walkthrough chart outlining City Manager-Council-Mayor and Mayor-CAFO-Council structures.

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- **Facilitator**: Libby, Mike, and Anna **Goal:** Walkthrough chart outlining City Manager-Council-Mayor and Mayor-CAFO-Council structures.

MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 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 Roundtable meeting on Tuesday, April 25, 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.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.
Kaleb Abebe – Absent
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Absent*
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent
Nikolas Bowie – Present
Kevin Chen – Absent
Max Clermont – Absent
Jennifer Gilbert – Absent*
Kai Long – Present
Patrick Magee – Present
Mina Makarious – Present
Lisa Peterson – Present
Ellen Shachter – Present
Susan Shell – Present
Jim Stockard – Present
Kathleen Born – Present
Present – 9, Absent – 6. Quorum established.
***Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo was marked present at 5:40p.m.**
***Member Jennifer Gilbert was marked present at 5:37p.m.**

Members of the Charter Review Committee held a roundtable meeting on Tuesday, April 25, 2023, to continue their discussion on the form of government in Cambridge.

The Chair, Kathleen Born, reminded members of the Committee and the public that it was a roundtable meeting, noting that no public comment and no votes would be taken during the meeting. Present at the meeting were Michael Ward and Elizabeth Corbo from the Collins Center who made themselves available to respond to any questions or comments brought forward by Committee members.

Anna Corning, Project Manager, gave an overview of the agenda for the meeting and noted that the discussions would be on City Manager-Council-Mayor form of government and related changes and on Mayor-Chief Administrative and Finance Officer (CAFO)-Council form of government and related changes. Anna Corning shared that Committee members should be concentrating on the strengths and challenges of each during the discussion.

Anna Corning recognized member Jim Stockard who led a focused discussion on City Manager-Council-Mayor form of government. Jim Stockard gave an overview of the pros of having a City Manager, sharing that City Managers are not subject to political pressure and are able to choose a successful team to run the various City Departments. Jim Stockard shared that they feel with the many communications, public comment, and forums the Charter Review Committee has conducted, the public seem to be leaning towards keeping a City Manager. Jim Stockard shared a question that was brought forward by a member of the public which was, “What is the problem you are trying to fix?”. Jim Stockard shared that that question has stuck with him and believes that the City, for the most part, runs fairly well with the current form of government. Jim Stockard reviewed some of the cons that have been brought up during discussion regarding City Manager form of government, sharing the most noticeable concern with members is the City Manager not being an elected official and having too much power overseeing the budget. After Jim Stockard reviewed the pros and cons of the City Manager-Council-Mayor form of government, Committee members were able to offer comments and concerns, with many members sharing their opinion on this type of form of government.

Anna Corning recognized member Nikolas Bowie who led a focused discussion on Mayor-CAFO-Council form of government. Nikolas Bowie shared that no form of existing democracy is a guarantee that an elected leader will care about everybody in the community, but what democracy does well is create a strong incentive for elected officials to care what people think. Nickolas Bowie noted that as members of the Committee, they have many resources to ensure that City government is accountable. They noted that it is important, whether it is with electing a strong Mayor, or any type of form of government, that elections are as inclusive and as representative as possible. By stressing the importance of having representation in elections, voters will have the ability to make the government more accountable than it currently already is. Nikolas Bowie stressed that democratic accountability has been the biggest factor in those in favor of a strong Mayor. Nikolas Bowie shared that they were in favor of a suggestion made by the Collins Center, which would include a Resident Advisory Committee for strong Mayor form of government and suggested that having a citizen jury and/or having random people chosen to participate in decisions would be beneficial. Nikolas Bowie ended by noting that they believe

that the City will work better if everyone can equally participate in deciding how everything in the community can flourish. After Nikolas Bowier reviewed the pros and cons of the Mayor-CAFO- Council form of government, discussion was open to Committee members to offer their comments and concerns.

Anna Corning suggested that moving forward it could be a good idea for the Committee to start focusing on other aspects of the Charter and return to a form of government discussion after Committee members have thought about it more.

The Chair, Kathleen Born offered closing remarks about form of government and shared they agreed with Anna Corning on the idea of taking a break on form of government discussion and coming back to it later. The Chair shared that it is important to discuss other topics of the Charter so the Committee can continue moving forward.

The Chater Review Committee adjourned at approximately 7:30p.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/491?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=c12c827141cb251ff084cfe8d4262b66

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 Makarious
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 Makarious – 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 ballet 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 22nd.

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.

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https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/481?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=8db2b148ca769c0a979e9f579e4e1cab

In Support of an At-Large Council

Michael Whelan <michaelw37@yahoo.com>

Mon 4/10/2023 8:10 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to strongly support retaining Cambridge's current system of at-large, ranked-choice Council elections. In any city, but especially a geographically compact one like Cambridge, it is critical for council members to be responsible to the entire city and to prioritize the public good of the city as a whole. Ward-based elections would diminish that responsibility and also reduce healthy political competition, since the wards would need to be quite small given Cambridge's size. It is easy to imagine only one or two candidates signing up to run and incumbents facing no competition. Over time, I am worried this would create a system beholden to parochial groups, special interests, or even dark money. Please keep Cambridge politics clean, responsible, and responsive. At-large, ranked-choice is the way to go!

Thank you,
Michael Whelan
30 Langdon St

No to wards

Wyatt Berlinic <wyatt.berlinic@gmail.com>
Mon 4/10/2023 8:14 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Good evening,

I'm a resident of Cambridge living near Inman square.

I'd like to register my objection to a ward based representation system. Wards are less representative of the population as a whole and will bias a system that is already biased against renters to favor home owners even more.

Thanks,
Wyatt

Public comment re Ward based elections

vasikri@gmail.com <vasikri@gmail.com>

Mon 4/10/2023 9:27 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee,

We live in a time when our nation is divided on knife edge due to gerrymandered voting districts. We are one country, and we are one Cambridge. We deserve City Councilors who want to serve the city as a whole, not a select group of constituents in one part of the city.

Setting up ward based elections would mean drawing somewhat arbitrary boundaries and slicing up our community into a multitude of pieces. Should the line go down one street or the next? Neither. It should go around our city.

Cambridge isn't that big that we need to slice it up into little bits to govern it. We all need a functional and efficient public transit system. We all need roads that make sense.

We do not need more division. We do not need little fiefdoms establishing themselves across our town.

Please vote against ward based elections for the City Council. We are one city and we should vote as such.

Thanks,
Vivek Sikri

The challenges of adding ward councillors

Christopher Cassa <ccassa@gmail.com>
Mon 4/10/2023 10:50 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee Members,

Thank you for your passion and dedication to evaluating our unique form of city government and for your thoughtful consideration of issues such as at-large vs. ward-based councillors. While I appreciate the concept of increased local representation, I urge you to maintain the existing at-large representation and not to switch to a partial or fully ward-based system.

A ward-based system would reduce our focus on city-wide policies and solutions. For example, housing, school, and transportation policies are all examples of issues that impact the entire city and should be considered at the city level. For example, housing policies such as affordable housing and rent control affect residents across the city, not just in specific wards. Similarly, school policies such as funding for school renovations and new programming (e.g. pre-K) have a city-wide impact and should be considered at the city level. Transportation considerations naturally affect many people throughout the city and optimal solutions rely on participation from every ward.

Councilors should have a broad understanding of the benefits and impacts of these programs which affect the entire city, rather than being focused on the more narrow interests of a particular ward.

Additionally, a ward-based system would likely lead to **less democratic accountability and less political engagement**. In our neighboring city, Somerville, 4 out of 7 of the ward councilors ran unopposed. This lack of competition would not force councilors to stay in touch with voters and be held accountable. This lack of competition also makes it harder for citizens to hold their elected officials accountable and decreases political engagement.

Another important point is that **a ward-based system could lead to fewer renters being represented in the city council**. As many renters move more frequently than owners, it would make it much harder for councilors who needed to move, particularly if they moved to a different ward, to continue to be elected. This would likely lead to a council that is less representative of the city's population as a whole.

Councillors already face immense pressure to prioritize concerns of a narrow few, often friends or neighbors, over the broader interests and goals of the city. If we were to switch to a ward-based system, some councillors would be further committed to that narrow few, and might even be 'fully insulated' from helping with problems that serve the important interests of the entire community

A ward-based system would also find challenges in the rapid changes in population density and lack of clarity on where everyone in our city lives. If ward councilors were assigned based on voter registration data, we **would likely disenfranchise those who are not US citizens, or those who are already underrepresented in government, such as those on the margins.** Lower density neighborhoods could also end up having fewer ward councilors in a system with proportional representation based on population density, obviating the goals of those who may want a ward for each "small neighborhood". How would large populations such as MIT and Harvard University be handled? They would almost certainly be entitled to a ward councilor each by any reasonable population based system. At least that would be an interesting twist.

We already have a lot of 'culture wars' going on in the city, and I worry that separating our neighborhoods even more into fiefdoms **will enhance these cultural narratives and will serve to further divide the city**. We

already over-serve the loudest voices in the room, and this could define and entrench this into policy with smaller constituencies. We also have nine councilors which is... _plenty_, and any system would almost certainly need to expand the number of councilors, making meetings longer and more contentious.

Finally, having been at the whims of a ward councillor in Somerville for a renovation project which was approved and successful was still nonetheless very stressful and frustrating. I saw firsthand how a neighbor's project was set back for over a year and is still not complete because of the whims of one councillor. Every single time that resident had to come back to the board, he had to pay an architect for new plans, waste tons of time and money, and ultimately his lot has not been redeveloped. **Any one person who can control your fate with the city, and effectively slow your process down until they are available or satisfied that 'the community has been heard' can be enormously frustrating and is antidemocratic**. We already have systems in place for community engagement which are already overstressing staff, giving even more veto power to a capricious person can really damage the community and also frustrate the efforts of staff to apply policies consistently and fairly. It is also an invitation for grift, favoritism, and donor prioritization.

I believe that a ward-based system (in whole or in part) would do enormous harm to achieving the long-term goals of the city and would have many damaging effects to the unity, operations, and developing the smart and fair policies we need.

Very best regards,
Chris

--
Christopher Cassa

Supporting a strong mayor system and opposing switching to a ward system

Esther Hanig <ehanig12@gmail.com>
Tue 4/11/2023 10:00 AM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

To members of the Charter Review Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support of a strong mayor system of government and my strong opposition to switching to a ward system for councilors.

While a decade ago, I would have opposed a strong mayor system, I now think it is what is needed for our times. Over the past decades, our world, our nation and our city are increasingly in the midst of vast changes and critical challenges unlike those we have faced for a long time - whether it is climate change, housing and worker shortages or rapidly changing technology, among others. These changes are magnified by the presence of Harvard, MIT, and our booming industries in Kendall Square and the Alewife area which bring both opportunity, but also challenges and threats to the very essence of who we are as a community.

I believe that this reality requires a governmental system that provides strong leadership and vision to harness those opportunities and to address the challenges, both for today and also, perhaps even more importantly, for the years ahead and future generations. I feel that our system, where there is no real helm of leadership, is not adequate to the task. Having worked with the business community and the neighborhood of Union Square in Somerville during an intensive process of planning and citizen involvement led by Mayor Curtatone, I have seen firsthand how effective good strong strategic leadership can be. I am also watching what Mayor Wu is accomplishing with great admiration and respect. Both Mayor Curatone and Mayor Wu have demonstrated strong leadership, strategic vision, and effective implementation, deeply grounded in the ideals of social justice and equity.

I also feel that, in the interest of true democracy and equitable representation, switching to a ward system would be a grave error. Not only would it disenfranchise renters, who often have to switch neighborhoods in search of housing they can afford (if they are lucky enough to be able to stay in the city), I think this system would be detrimental to our efforts to build a city not just for today and today's residents, but also to provide for future residents. We already see the effects of provincialism, as well as all too often, selfish myopia, in our zoning efforts, and a ward system would only intensify that while making it exponentially harder to create measures that benefit the whole city and future generations.

If you choose not to endorse a strong mayor system, I cannot urge you strongly enough to change the terms of the Councilors. With our current system of elections every two years, it is very hard to make some of the difficult, but necessary, changes that the times demand. In the second year of their terms, Councilors are hesitant to introduce or support anything controversial, lest it lead to losing their reelection campaign. I would suggest that the Council terms either be longer or stagger terms so that not every Councilor is up for reelection every two years.

Finally, I urge you to strongly support that we continue our voting system of proportional representation which is a model for democracy and equity.

Thank you for all your hard work and for your consideration of my views.

Esther Hanig
136 Pine St,, #2

A Better Cambridge's Statement in Support of At-Large Proportional Representation

Dan Phillips <danlphillips234@gmail.com>

Tue 4/11/2023 11:16 AM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>;City Clerk <cityclerk@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Members of the Cambridge Charter Review Committee,

A Better Cambridge (ABC) recognizes that the charter review is an important opportunity for Cambridge to reassess its system of government. We would first like to express our thanks to the Charter Review Committee (Committee) for its work to identify any shortcomings in how our fellow citizens are represented and how effective our government is in creating real, positive change for our City. Given that housing costs have long been identified as the most important issue to Cambridge residents, we at ABC hope the Committee prioritizes effective representation, because the same people who bear the brunt of the housing crisis tend to have the hardest time getting their voice heard. For new Cambridge residents, lower-income households, folks who are too busy with school, work, multiple jobs, caring for family, etc., it can be challenging to engage deeply in our political process. We appreciate the Committee's focus on making politics more accessible for more people. To match our city's values, we urge the Committee to ensure that any changes to the charter serve to promote democracy, not constrict it. We are therefore concerned that the Committee is considering shifting the city council from at-large proportional representation to either a "ward" based system or a hybrid system with some ward and some at-large councillors. We also want to highlight the importance of leadership in resolving the housing crisis.

ABC strongly opposes transitioning from at-large proportional representation to any ward-based system because of the negative effects on political representation and housing production.

First, a ward-based or hybrid system will disproportionately amplify the voices of homeowners and disempower renters who already have an undersized impact on how the city government is run, despite making up a majority of the city's population. Renters move more, and would much more frequently transfer between wards, severing the link between them and their existing ward councillor. This would present a larger barrier to renters building strong relationships with their representatives. Furthermore, councillors would be less focused on addressing renters' needs because they would become a less vocal, less reliable constituency. It is already challenging for renters to run for City Council, and our persistent housing shortage could force prospective candidates to leave their ward and disrupt their candidacy if they could not find housing within their budget. A lack of renter representation on the City Council is a gap in representation that we hope is addressed during the charter reform process.

Second, a councillor representing a ward has an incentive to "protect" their turf over prioritizing citywide needs. Many politicians see affordable housing and apartments as undesirable, and while they may acknowledge a need for it, will push for it to go outside of their district. With more than 21,000 people on the CHA's waitlist and rents climbing, it is urgent that we accelerate housing and affordable housing production. Yet, a recent study has shown that shifting to a ward-based system harms housing production. Cambridge can't afford for political haggling over where new homes will go to delay housing production.

Third, wards undermine proportional representation's ability to make every vote count. Even without an intent to gerrymander, there is no way to draw ward lines without breaking up constituencies, so councillors would lose the ability to unite geographically diverse coalitions. We hope the Committee can improve our current system of

proportional representation rather than adopt a new, less representative system. Under the current system, a councillor appealing to voters in a particular neighborhood that reaches the threshold purely on that basis can already be elected that way. By moving to wards, we would be imposing the importance of arbitrary neighborhood boundaries on voters in a way they don't seem to be expressing in their voting patterns. Cambridge may be geographically small, but it has a lot of big ideas, and proportional representation is far better at giving everyone a chance to be heard through their vote and elected representatives.

Lastly, ABC understands the Committee is considering other charter changes as well, such as having an elected mayor instead of a city manager. Although ABC is not taking a stance at this time, we would like to express the importance of executive leadership and accountability. Housing has been the number one issue for years, but Cambridge hasn't seen the kind of bold action that our elections show voters want.

Thank you,

A Better Cambridge

Wards limit representation

Camilla Elvis <camillaelvis@gmail.com>

Tue 4/11/2023 1:36 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Dear Charter Review Committee,
I am writing to express my strong opposition to Ward councilors in Cambridge.
More counselors limit politicians ability to represent us along only the lines of where we live. I want my representatives to be able to get elected based by representing interests I share with other cantabridgians that go beyond geography.
At large Councilors in Proportional representation have the freedom to represent city wide interests and the competition to incentives them to do so.
While geography may not be explicitly represented through our city counselors, neighborhoods have vast number of opportunities to make their voices heard on city issues occurring near them through community meetings and boards and commissions. Citywide Interests go deeply under representatives in those meetings. It is critical to have our elective representatives speak for all of Cambridge.

Thank you for working on this important process,
Camilla Elvis
28 Linnaean St

Sent from my iPhone

Charter public comment

Ben Simon <btsimon@gmail.com>
Tue 4/11/2023 3:50 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

1 attachments (4 MB)
belonging, Bk.1 a_o 9_17en format 2 copy 2.pdf;

Dear Review Committee Members,

I am writing to express my support for Cambridge moving away from the anti-democratic City Manager Model towards a Strong Mayor model. I do think it's unfortunate that we are faced with this binary choice, as though those are the only two options, but certainly an executive that is elected by the people is more democratic than an executive who is not.

I would like to provide some contextual history for Plan E that it's possible you may not be aware of. Although the common narrative surrounding Plan E is that it emerged as a means of curbing political corruption, a closer look at its history shows that there is another side to this story. My source for this is local scholar Bill Cunnigham's excellent book, Belonging, which he has given me permission to share and which I have attached to this email. This thoroughly researched book provides a detailed account of the history of Plan E which I cannot fully do justice to briefly, but a simplified account of his research could read as follows. Plan E was crafted by Harvard and other business interests in Cambridge as a reaction against militant pro-labor governments that were getting elected, and that were governing in the interests of the working class Irish immigrants they represented and in so doing alienating the interests of local businesses including Harvard. Rather than removing corruption, Plan E's actual intent was to take take power away from the voting populace and put it in the hands of an unelected and unaccountable city manager who would preserve the status quo and govern in the interests of the business community. The book reveals that the appropriately named Plan E Association that drafted our city charter was chaired by Harvard Dean James M. Landis and the actual charter language was drafted by Professor Chandler W. Johnson.

The homelessness and housing crises facing this city will never be solved while democracy is inert to protect the interests of a powerful and wealthy minority whose interests would be harmed by their solution. Please vote to overturn this deliberately anti-democratic City Manager Model that has no place in a country founded on the principles of democracy.

Thank you for your time and service,
Ben Simon
67 Bishop Allen Drive
Cambridge, Ma 02139
857-615-2611

letter #2 to the Charter Review Committee

Susan Fleischmann <susan.fleischmann@gmail.com>
Fri 4/14/2023 10:05 AM
To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>
Cc: Kathleen Born <kathyborn@gmail.com>;Peterson, Lisa <Lisacp829@gmail.com>
Thanks for soliciting community input.

4-15-2023

Dear Members of the Charter Review Committee,

Let's use our experience to fix what we have, and keep a professional City Manager who is not beholden to the loudest voices in the room.

For decades, I worked in Cambridge as a nonprofit executive director, and had the opportunity to interact extensively with both elected officials and with the City administration. For the most part, I felt that those relationships were respectful and constructive. However, I also worked on both the C2 committee and the Broadband Task Force, and experienced the frustration when City officials ignored the countless hours and very thoughtful work that had been put in by committed and concerned residents. For many years, I tried to work with the City to re-imagine the structure of public, educational, and government cable tv access in Cambridge, and remain profoundly disappointed that, despite a depth of knowledge and experience, I was unable to prevail.

The point is, I understand the frustrations of those who seek a more responsive City. Some believe that this can be achieved by instituting a strong mayor form of government. But as I said in my previous letter (pasted below), I still believe in professional management, removed from politics, afforded by the current Plan E system. I believe in the way this system does not consolidate power with one person or one body. We now have the opportunity, after over 80 years of experience, to address the ways that Plan E fails to support the kind of community we seek.

We can look around to neighboring communities and see extremely effective elected mayors. We also do not have to look far to find corruption and mismanagement. We have the opportunity before us to reconfigure the job descriptions and functions of the City Manager, the Mayor, and the City Council. Why not keep our system and address its weaknesses in a more targeted way?

What is within the current structure that keeps the City Council from using its power to direct funding to constituents' priorities through the annual budget process? Why doesn't the Council fully exercise its responsibilities to oversee the work of the City Manager? Why aren't the Council's priorities acted upon? What are the functional stumbling blocks that can be removed in order to make our existing system work to its fullest potential? Why not reorganize areas of responsibility and authority to make this work? This committee can get into the weeds to address these questions and more. This is how we "do the work of democracy." We do not need to wholesale discard the current system because we CAN find enduring solutions for the next 80 years.

Sincerely,

Susan Fleischmann
5 St. Mary Road

3-24-2023

Dear Members of the Charter Review Committee,

First, thank you so much for all of your hard work on the City's Charter. You have spent many hours and much brain power, and it is most appreciated!

I am writing in opposition to introducing strong mayor governance in Cambridge. My concerns lie in two areas: management and politics.

Management is a professional skill that is often taken for granted. Experience in project management, human resources, budgeting and fiscal oversight are not skills inherent to anything other than….managing.

The skills required to be a successful elected official have very little overlap with the ability to be a successful manager, in my opinion. A strong mayor might be challenged when weighing the needs of the City at-large with the particular interests of their most vocal constituents. Attention to those who reliably vote may take precedence over those who may not. Whether consciously or not, actions will be taken with the next election in mind.

The current system enables the City to seek a skilled, experienced manager, who is then (hopefully) disengaged from electoral politics. It provides continuity that does not fluctuate based on the electoral calendar.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Susan Fleischmann
5 St. Mary Road

--

Susan Fleischmann

Fwd: Reforming Cambridge Government

btantony <btantony@aol.com>
Sat 4/15/2023 9:51 AM
To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

Sent from my iPhone

Barbara Anthony, Esq.

Senior Fellow in Healthcare, Pioneer Institute
Former Senior Fellow & Associate, Center for Business & Government, Harvard Kennedy School
Former MA Undersecretary, Consumer Affairs & Business Regulation

Cell: 857-998-0273
Email: btantony@aol.com;
Barbarabanthony@gmail.com
Banthony@pioneerinstitute.org

Begin forwarded message:

From: btantony <btantony@aol.com>
Date: April 15, 2023 at 9:13:31 AM EDT
To: charterreviewcommittee@cambridge.gov
Subject: Reforming Cambridge Government

Dear Charter Review Committee:

I submit the following recommendations for your consideration.
1. Eliminate the proportional voting system for electing councilors. Few people understand this system as it is very complex. And a very small percent of eligible voters participate. While few understand it, it is used by those who do understand it to elect special interest candidates beholding to the small percent of voters who elected them. While originally conceived to benefit racial and ethnic minorities so that all would have some representation, it has become perverted and manipulated over the years to insure that narrow, ideological interests control the city council. The result is the current control of council members not by ethnic or racial minorities but by narrow interests such as cyclists, certain development interests, and no compromise climate zealots. This will only continue in the future unless the system is changed to elect councilors by simple majorities of voters.

2. Councilors should be elected on a district basis not city wide. Under the current system it is almost impossible to vote out councilors. They are not accountable to any particular geographic area of the city. Because of the complexities of proportional voting, which I still do not understand after voting here for almost 40 years, councilors cannot be held accountable to local residents who are harmed by their policies. The same people are elected over and over and over again until they get tired and move on

of their own volition. It seldom happens that someone is defeated and then it is because they have offended the narrow interests which elected them and they are targeted for elimination.

3. Cambridge should have a strong mayor like other cities such Boston and Somerville. The current system gives enormous power to unelected officials who are not accountable to voters. So we have councilors who are elected by small special interest groups of voters and a city manager and staff not elected at all with enormous power over policy and implementation. There is far, far too little accountability to voters.

Under the current system of government, Cambridge has become a very divided city. There is enormous frustration and anger too because many feel powerless to make changes under the current system. While originally intended to provide fairness and more equity, the current system is now the captive of small groups of single interest voters manipulated by incumbents to retain power and shut down dissenting views.

Cambridge is a very wealthy city in terms of its finances thanks to our enormous commercial base. That base was built over many decades by savvy city managers and state officials who understood economics and finance. It was not built by the city council. For decades city councilors had have the luxury of inheriting sound finances while they pursue their narrow policy interests. Until recently it was hard for the council to inflict economic or financial harm on the city by their decisions but that has changed. Their infrastructure, housing, and environmental decisions are threatening to undermine a balance that has taken decades to achieve and there is little that voters can do to change that course.

For all these reasons, the structure of Cambridge government must be changed and this commission is the city's only hope.

Thank you for considering my views,

Barbara Anthony
1580 Mass Ave

Sent from my iPhone

Barbara Anthony, Esq.

Senior Fellow in Healthcare, Pioneer Institute
Former Senior Fellow & Associate, Center for Business & Government, Harvard Kennedy School
Former MA Undersecretary, Consumer Affairs & Business Regulation

Cell: 857-998-0273
Email: btantony@aol.com;
Barbarabanthony@gmail.com
Banthony@pioneerinstitute.org

Fwd: Charter Review Meeting

Young Kim <ycknorris@gmail.com>
Sun 4/16/2023 11:53 AM
To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>
Cc: Blier, Suzanne <blier@fas.harvard.edu>

3 attachments (428 KB)
Policy Order History Mitigation_Process.pdf; Policy Order History Budget_MassAve4.pdf; Policy Order History Garden St Accomodation.pdf;

Dear Chairwoman Born and Members of the Charter Review Committee,

Very unfortunately, due to family commitment, I will not be able to join Cambridge Citizens Coalition's Q&A and discussion of the City's Charter Review with you. As you know, I have been emailing you with my observations of ongoing city governance problems so that you can see the extent of the problem and develop charter reforms to make Cambridge more responsive, transparent and accountable.

To this end, I am attaching examples of the broken Policy Order/City Manager Report process for your review. What we desperately need is an independent governance oversight office - something like Inspector General, ombudsman or office of compliance.

The City Charter must make it clear that the role of the City Council is to issue Policy Order for the City Manager and his staff to investigate an issue in the PO and report back recommended solutions to the issue; and not for CM to execute City Council's recommended solution.

Thank you for your consideration,

Young Kim
Norris Street

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Suzanne** <Suzanne@cccoalition.org>
Date: Fri, Apr 14, 2023 at 10:04 PM
Subject: Charter Review Meeting
To: Young <ycknorris@gmail.com>

View this email in your browser

1. JOIN US! This Sunday April 16 at 4-6 PM (by zoom) in a Q&A and discussion of the City's Charter Review with members of this Charter Review group, **Help us address ongoing city governance problems and create a better path forward.**

Register for this CCC Charter Review zoom meeting here:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcrde6opzwoHtGOdlG96d4svieX71komVcU

Camb Day Letter "Accountability is needed on issues around Cambridge's CSO"

Young Kim <ycknorris@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 6:13 PM

To: Siddiqui, Sumbul <ssiddiqui@cambridgema.gov>;Mallon, Alanna <amallon@cambridgema.gov>;Azeem, Burhan <bazeem@cambridgema.gov>;Carlone, Dennis <dcarlone@cambridgema.gov>;McGovern, Marc <mmcGovern@cambridgema.gov>;Nolan, Patricia <pnolan@cambridgema.gov>;Simmons, Denise <dsimmons@cambridgema.gov>;Toner, Paul <ptoner@cambridgema.gov>;Zondervan, Quinton <qzondervan@cambridgema.gov>;Huang, Yi-An <yhuang@cambridgema.gov>;Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>;LeBlanc, Diane <dleblanc@cambridgema.gov>

Dear City Officials,

I am submitting my Letter to the Editor of Cambridge Day, City Manager Yi-An Huang to be an impartial, transparent chief executive accountable to Cantabrigians for your consideration. This was just one specific issue needing accountability but, In fact, accountability, transparency and traceability (of city's action to its authorization/responsible staff) are needed on all issues in Cambridge.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter,
Respectfully yours,
Young Kim
Norris Street

Fwd: AHO2 proposal

Dan Tenney <dgtenney3@gmail.com>

Mon 5/1/2023 10:02 AM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>

To the Committee:

While I share a sense of urgency to support a more equitable and affordable housing market in Cambridge, I am very concerned that **the new AHO2 proposal now under consideration is very problematic and should NOT be adopted.** It has the potential to actually inflate costs, disrupt neighborhoods, circumvent community involvement, and may ultimately yield fewer affordable housing units in the long-run amid other unintended consequences.

The original Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO1) was already a very significant and controversial revision of the Zoning By-Law. It has been in effect for slightly more than two years, and is acknowledged to have "...generated a healthy pipeline of six projects..."; The current AHO Annual Report (August 2022) actually lists a total of 25 projects, with 10 abandoned and 15 (60%) still active. AHO1 was enacted with an automatic 5-year review to judge its performance, effectiveness and consequences, which should occur in less than two years.. AHO2 is nonetheless premised on early, anecdotal reporting, and would preempt that review. Frankly, **it's an extreme proposal which disregards meaningful review and short-circuits the progressive evolution of planning or zoning** guidelines which might otherwise guide the development of our City.

That said, greater residential density in the squares and along the appropriate corridors is a worthwhile way to achieve more affordable housing, but the details are critical. AHO2 includes several provisions which are alarming and should be scrutinized for the potential surprises they may contain. For example:

1) The proposed new Sub-paragraph 11.207.5.1 (e) would allow an owner to assemble parcels in a "hammerhead" configuration with minimal frontage on a designated AHO square or corridor, and then extend the greatly-enhanced AHO development rights back into the adjacent residential streets, in some cases many hundreds of feet away from the "intended" AHO zone. For example, a sequence of parcels assembled from a toe-hold on Bishop Allen Drive could be extended back to Harvard Street, and toe-holds on Massachusetts Avenue could extend massive development rights back to Oxford Street or Washington Avenue. The same is true at many, many locations across the City, and AHO2 contains no recognition or limitation of this possibility. This sort of provision is overly broad, to say the least. While it may simply be poorly considered and badly written, **such a provision suggests that it has been included in AHO2 with a particular project or beneficiary in mind.** The Council should request clarification, at least.

2) Similarly, the proposed new Sub-paragraph 11.207.5.2.4 (f) would allow essentially unlimited residential development on an AHO parcel if Green Area Open Space is preserved or provided. There might be no height limit whatsoever, and an FAR limit may similarly not exist in certain zoning districts. The logic of this proposed Sub-paragraph seems to be circular and it may simply be poorly written; the **Council should require clarification of its actual intent.**

Respectfully submitted,
Daniel Tenney
Washington Avenue

please spend public money more wisely--I support Mr. Young Kim's letter

Ausra Kubilius <ausmkub@gmail.com>
Mon 5/1/2023 11:08 AM

To: Siddiqui, Sumbul <ssiddiqui@cambridgema.gov>;Mallon, Alanna <amallon@cambridgema.gov>;Azeem, Burhan <bazeem@cambridgema.gov>;Carlone, Dennis <dcarlone@cambridgema.gov>;McGovern, Marc <mmcGovern@cambridgema.gov>;Nolan, Patricia <pnolan@cambridgema.gov>;Simmons, Denise <dsimmons@cambridgema.gov>;Toner, Paul <ptoner@cambridgema.gov>;Zondervan, Quinton <qzondervan@cambridgema.gov>;City Clerk <cityclerk@Cambridgema.gov>;City Manager <CityManager@CambridgeMA.GOV>;Cambridge Charter Review Committee <CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov>;O'Riordan, Owen <ooriordan@cambridgema.gov>

Cc: Young Kim <ycknorris@gmail.com>

Dear Mayor, City Councillors and City Clerk,

City Manager (CM) Huang is following the same business-as-usual practices, which perpetuates the same lack of transparency and accountability of his predecessors. His cover letter for FY2024 submitted budget and appropriation order, for example, is identical to the FY2023 submittal letter save for the simple changing of "The Submitted Budget" to "The budget book," w promise that "The Submitted Budget and back up materials will be available to the City Council" at the City Council meeting. There is no way for anyone to review or for any of the public t comment on the proposed budget when the budget book and backup material are not available before the meeting. **Please require the City Manager to submit these records as well a cost justification for the CSO implementation to its completion before referring his submission to the Finance Committee**.

My request is based on the fact that the approved FY24 appropriation plan of $40,000,000 in Section VI – Public Investment of FY23 Budget Book, mushroomed to the authorization reque the CM's Agenda Item #2 to borrow $50,000,000 to provide funds for the reconstruction of the Mass Avenue between Waterhouse Street and Alewife Parkway (ABP). This is a whopping 2 increase from the projected plan just a year ago. In his submitted budget, former CM DePasquale added scope to the approach and timeline of MassAve4 project which was approved jus previous week but kept the appropriation plan at $40,000,000. And now, CM Huang drops the other shoe, increasing the approved appropriation plan by 25%. This raises many questions which includes but not limited to:

1. Does it really cost $10,000,000 more to revisit previously implemented separated bike lanes using quick-build from Dudley Street to ABP (Installed Fall 2021) and from Roseland Street to Beech Street (Installed Summer 2022), together to be called Segment E?
2. With no visibility of actual cost of Segment E quick Build, including cost of any mitigation plans yet to be developed, was the cost effective given the short period between completion and the do-over?
3. If CM can change the budget at will, does the cost matter at all or is the sky the limit for CSO implementation? When the public demanded delay, however, in the Porter Square project until the catenary wires came down, we were told it can't be delayed because of CSO dictated timeline.
3. The submitted operating expenses for education for FY24 is $245,000,000. Is borrowing 20% of what we spend on our children's education for just 2 miles of the projecte miles of separated bike lanes a wise allocation of taxpayers' money?
4. If the timeline for the separated bike lanes from Waterhouse Street to ABP is the same as the approved timeline for Mass Ave Dudley St. to Beech St. (Segment A of MassAve4) and Mass Ave Roseland St. to Waterhouse St. (Segment B), then the project will be completed by the end of FY26. How can we make CM accountable if there is a overrun of $50,000,000 borrowed?
5. CM must submit and get approval for approach and timeline for MassAve4 - Mass Ave Partial Construction Project just as former CM had to for MassAve4. The approach have to include measures not to duplicate or waste MassAve4 work to date, including the House Doctor engineering support at a contract value of $1,121,196.00.
6. Approved FY23 Budget included $5,000,000 for the Complete Streets Program MassAve4 -- Harvard Sq Bus Stops (1/2 funding) from Plympton St. to Garden St. This is Segment C and D of MassAve4 that the City Council approved full construction on 4/25/2022. This will put the total capital cost of MassAve4 - Mass Ave Partial Construction Project to be $60,000,000. Total capital budget for CSO implementation also includes the unknown capital cost CSO implementation component of the River Stre and unaccountable operating cost of all the CSO projects. So, the capital expenditure alone is fast approaching $100,000,000 if all operating expenditures are accounted for.3.

Respectfully yours,

Young Kim

Norris Street