

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE  
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 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, June 6, 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**  
**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Absent\***  
**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 – Absent**  
**Kathleen Born – Present**  
**Present – 13, Absent – 2. Quorum established.**

\*Jessica DeJesus was marked present at 5:36p.m.

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized Member Lisa Peterson who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from May 9, 2023 and place them on file.**

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

**Kaleb Abebe – Yes**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Absent**

**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 – Yes**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Absent**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 13, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized Member Patrick Magee who made a motion to adopt communications received from Committee Members and the Public and place them on file.**

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

**Kaleb Abebe – Yes**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes**

**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent**

**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 – Yes**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Absent**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 13, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.**

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

John Hawkinson thanked the Committee and Law Department staff for responding to his communication and referenced some of the response from the Law Department's memo.

Valerie Bonds thanked Committee Members for the important decision that they will have to make and shared that some of their concerns with government are about accountability.

James Williamson shared that they were in support of a city-wide survey for residents on topics discussed in Charter Review.

Heather Hoffman offered comments on the form of government and noted that whatever form of government the Committee decides, it needs to promote transparency.

The Chair, Kathleen Born reviewed the letter received from the Law Department (Attachment A) regarding a legal opinion on voting for Charter Review Committee deliberations. Anna Corning, Project Manager, and Kathleen Born were available to clarify questions from Committee Members.

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized Member Max Clermont who made a motion to move forward with the City Manager-Mayor-City Council form of government as part of the committee deliberation process.**

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

**Kaleb Abebe – Yes**

**Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes**

**Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes**

**Nikolas Bowie – No**

**Kevin Chen – Yes**

**Max Clermont – Yes**

**Jennifer Gilbert – No**

**Kai Long – Yes**

**Patrick Magee – Yes**

**Mina Makarious – Yes**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – No**

**Susan Shell – No**

**Jim Stockard – Absent**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 10, No – 4, Absent – 1. Motion passed.**

Anna Corning introduced Elizabeth Corbo from the Collins Center who opened discussion on the Legislative Branch of government to Committee Members. Anna Corning noted that there should be three main points that Committee Members should focus on during conversation, which were:

1. Does the Committee want to recommend a change to how City Councillors represent the City? Adding some or all district representation to the current all-at-large structure.

2. Does the Committee want to change the length of terms for City Councillors (or include staggered terms)? Does the Committee want to establish term limits for City Councillors?

3. Role of Mayor/Chair of City Council. How is the Mayor/Chair elected? What should the power and duties of the Mayor/Chair of City Council be?

Member Ellen Shachter offered comments on ward representation and at large Councillors and shared that they believed a key problem with the system is making sure minorities get the proper representation.

Member Susan Shell shared that she agreed with comments made by Member Ellen Shachter and noted it is important that areas of the City are not left out in decision making, which could happen by having neighborhood representation.

Member Lisa Peterson offered comments on the possibility of district Councillors and shared it could be beneficial to some residents in the City, but found the City being broken up into three districts would be problematic for effective representation.

Member Mina Makarios noted that they have similar thoughts to Member Lisa Peterson, and shared concerns about what does not work for the current system with low turnout rates and low representation.

Member Jessica Acevedo shared that district representation is important to have individuals represent the diverse population and noted that they were in favor of staggered terms for Councillors.

Member Patrick Magee shared frustrations with the current City government on both the administration and government side. Member Magee offered comments on district representation and goal setting.

Member Kevin Chen shared that they were leaning towards the at large representation and noted they would be interested in exploring where to direct attention on the legislative side of government.

Member Nikolas Bowie shared that they felt very strongly about having the Mayor be called the Chair of the City Council to reflect what they actually are and also felt strongly against district based representation.

Member Jennifer Gilbert shared the importance of accountability and having a city-wide perspective when it comes to major changes in the City. Member Gilbert noted that they were not in favor of switching to district representation at this time.

Member Kai Long offered the suggestion of each Councillor having different responsibilities in representation to help direct community members who have concerns and noted that there should be term limits for Councillors and possibly the City Manager.

The Chair, Kathleen Born shared that she believes that proportional representation already allows for neighborhood representation. She is not in favor of districts. The Chair offered comments on term limits, noting that she is not in favor of term limits, in particular eight or ten year term limits or shorter.

Members of the Charter Review Committee continued their discussion on government by offering concerns and suggestions on ways the Committee can continue to move forward with topics they wish to address while forming a new Charter to propose to the Council. Anna

Corning, Elizabeth Corbo, and Michael Ward from the Collins Center were available to respond to Committee members. Anna Corning shared that if Committee members were interested in learning more information on the roles and power of duties of the Chair of City Council/Mayor, she and the Collins Center would be available to provide material for future discussions.

Member Lisa Peterson shared concerns from residents on whether the Mayor should be the Chair of the School Committee or if it should be someone that is specifically elected to be on the School Committee. Member Peterson noted that she was in favor of having the Mayor being the Chair, but also offered suggestions on how the Chair could be elected. Chair Born responded to comments made by Member Peterson, sharing that if a Mayor were to be elected there should be a discussion on what the roles and duties of the Mayor should be.

Member Patrick Magee asked if the Chair could go through the process of how the Mayor is currently elected and share her experience while being on the Cambridge City Council. Chair Born was available to respond and was happy to give an overview of the process.

Anna Corning reviewed the major themes that were discussed throughout the meeting and recognized Committee Members for comments. Elizabeth Corbo offered comments on theories on why officials are challenged less in district representation versus at large. Anna Corning shared suggestions from the public on how the districts could potentially be divided.

Anna Corning suggested that if Members do not feel strongly about changing something, going forward there should be votes taken in order to move on from certain discussions and topics.

Members of the Charter Review, the Collins Center, and Anna Corning discussed the City having a “311” informational telephone number similar to Somerville to assist residents with reporting various concerns and incidents and receiving a response in a timely manner.

Member Ellen Shachter shared concerns about term limits. Anna Corning, Michael Ward, and Elizabeth Corbo were available to respond and provide examples of term limits in other municipalities in Massachusetts and other States. Michael Ward noted that term limits are very rare in Massachusetts. Anna Corning shared that she would get more information on Massachusetts municipalities to provide to the Committee. Member Jennifer Gilbert asked the Collins Center why Massachusetts is different from other States regarding term limits. Michael Ward shared that he would look into it further.

Member Kai Long offered comments on term limits and noted that they would be in favor of term limits for various reasons, including having more diversity.

Anna Corning reminded Committee members and the public of future meet and greets with residents and noted that there will be no meeting on July 4, 2023.

**The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30p.m.**

Attachment A – Legal opinion from the Law Department.

**Clerk’s Note:** This is a permanent record.

The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/522?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=12abd6eeef3d616d2cfd6f99744013e2](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/522?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=12abd6eeef3d616d2cfd6f99744013e2)