

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 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, June 27, 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 – Absent
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Present
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Present
Nikolas Bowie – Present
Kevin Chen – Absent*
Jennifer Gilbert – Absent
Kai Long – Absent
Mina Makarious – Present
Lisa Peterson – Present
Ellen Shachter – Present
Susan Shell – Present
Jim Stockard – Present
Kathleen Born – Present**

Present – 11, Absent – 4. Quorum established.

***Member Kevin Chen was marked present at 6:04p.m.**

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized Member Patrick Magee who made a motion to place the three communications from the public on file.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Absent
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
Nikolas Bowie – Yes
Kevin Chen – Absent
Jennifer Gilbert – Absent
Kai Long – Absent
Mina Makarios – Yes
Lisa Peterson – Yes
Ellen Shachter – Yes
Susan Shell – Yes
Jim Stockard – Yes
Kathleen Born – Yes
Yes – 11, Absent – 4. Motion passed.

Public Comment

Valerie Bonds offered comments on anti-bullying policy for Councillors in Boston, two-year terms for Councillors, and the process of electing a Mayor.

Anna Corning, Charter Review Committee Project Manager, explained to the Committee that the Council adopted a City Manager Agenda item at the June 26, 2023 City Council meeting making Charter Review Committee members Special Municipal Employees.

Anna Corning shared that she would like to continue the discussion from the previous meeting on term limits for City Councillors. Member Ellen Shachter offered comments on their experience with participating in a Board with term limits and how to balance democracy and participation, noting that new people will bring in new ideas.

Anna Corning recognized Member Susan Shell, Chair Kathleen Born, Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo, Member Mina Makarios, Member Patrick Magee, Member Nikolas Bowie, Member Jim Stockard, Member Lisa Peterson, Member Mosammat Faria Afreen, Member Max Clermont, and Member Kevin Chen who offered comments on term limits. Discussion included Committee members sharing concerns and suggestions on term limits, with some members expressing that they would be in favor of staggered terms, while others were leaning towards not having term limits. Member Kevin Chen highlighted that the Committee should focus on what type of term limit would serve the public's interest the most. Committee members recognized the importance of encouraging younger residents to be more involved with government and noted how term limits could discourage them from pursuing their participation. It was also suggested that voting in a Cambridge election can be overwhelming, which can push residents away from going out to vote.

Anna Corning reminded members that the Committee took a straw poll at the previous meeting not to extend term limits for City Councillors and noted that it is always something the Committee can come back to in the future to see where everyone is standing.

Anna Corning brought forward that she would like to conduct a straw poll with Committee members sharing if they would like to continue the conversation on term limits or are content with ending the conversation. There were nine members who shared that they would no longer like to continue the discussion, three members that would like to continue discussion, and three members that were absent during the poll.

Anna Corning opened discussion to Committee members on the election and powers of the Mayor/Chair of the City Council. Committee members discussed whether the title of Mayor should be changed to Chair of the City Council, Head of the City Council, Speaker of the Council, or President of the City Council. Chair Born suggested that the Mayor should not be the Chair of the School Committee and that School Committee members should be able to elect their own Chair. Chair Born noted that she was in favor of having a member of the City Council participate as a member of the School Committee for the purposes of budgeting. Members of the Committee agreed that there should be a change of title as well as agreeing with comments about the School Committee. Member Lisa Peterson commented that the Charter should reflect having a goal setting process for every term regarding Councillors because it can have a positive effect towards the City.

Anna Corning recognized Michael Ward from the Collins Center who noted that President and Chair are titles that have been used in municipal bodies, but he was not familiar with Speaker being used in Massachusetts.

Committee members continued discussion on changing the title of the Mayor and what role the Mayor should play in the City.

Anna Corning shared with the Committee that she would like to take a straw poll on changing the title of Mayor to Chair of the City Council, Head of the City Council, or President of the City Council. There were eleven members that were in favor of changing the title, one member who shared they have no opinion, and three members that were absent during the poll.

Anna Corning opened discussion to Committee members on the appointment process for department heads and multi member bodies. Anna Corning noted that currently the City Council appoints the City Manager, the City Auditor, and the City Clerk and noted that the City has many multi member bodies, Boards and Commissions, and Committees. She noted that the City Manager is currently responsible for making those appointments and that some of the Boards and Commission require Council approval.

Anna Corning recognized member Jim Stockard who shared that he believes the City Manager should be able to pick their own team when it comes to the executive branch and department heads within the City. He noted that if the Council wants the City Manager to be effective, it is not unreasonable for them to pick the team which they trust will help make the City successful. Member Stockard also shared that the City Council approval of appointments to Boards and Commissions is reasonable because they are policy making bodies. Many members of the Committee shared that they agreed with the comments that were made by Member Stockard.

Anna Corning recognized Member Nikolas Bowie who suggested that the City Council should have the power to remove or discipline department heads and offered comments on appointments to Boards and Commissions and the importance of their role within the City. Member Ellen Schachter shared that she was not in favor of the City Council having the power to remove department heads. Member Max Clermont agreed. Member Kevin Chen offered suggestions on City Council removal of department heads.

Elliot Veloso, First Assistant City Solicitor, offered clarifying remarks on Boards and Commissions and the role some department heads play in those Boards. Elliot Veloso was available to respond to questions and concerns from the Committee. Michael Ward shared examples of how the City Council is involved with the hiring process from other municipalities.

The Charter 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.