

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE  
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, JULY 18, 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, July 18, 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 – Absent\***  
**Kevin Chen – Present**  
**Max Clermont – Present**  
**Jennifer Gilbert – Absent\***  
**Kai Long – Present**  
**Patrick Magee – Present**  
**Mina Makarios – Absent\***  
**Lisa Peterson – Present**  
**Ellen Shachter – Present**  
**Susan Shell – Absent\***  
**Jim Stockard – Present**  
**Kathleen Born – Present**

**Present – 10, Absent – 5. Quorum established.**

**\*Members Nikolas Bowie and Jennifer Gilbert were marked present at 5:36p.m.**

**\*Member Mina Makarios was marked present at 5:48p.m.**

**\*Member Susan Shell was marked present at 6:31p.m.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized Member Patrick Magee who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from June 6, 2023, June 20, 2023, and June 27, 2023.**

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

**Kaleb Abebe – Absent**

**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 – Absent**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – Yes**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Yes**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized Member Ellen Shachter who made a motion to adopt the three communications received from the public, which were included in the Agenda Packet.**

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

**Kaleb Abebe – Absent**

**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 – Absent**

**Lisa Peterson – Yes**

**Ellen Shachter – Yes**

**Susan Shell – Yes**

**Jim Stockard – Yes**

**Kathleen Born – Yes**

**Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born opened Public Comment.**

Jameson Quinn shared that they read the current draft and noted that it was silent on the election methods. They shared that they look forward to the discussion around having an elected Mayor.

Committee members shared concerns and suggestions on how to organize and address comments and communications that come through the Charter Review website, highlighting the importance of responding to the residents that due submit comments.

Anna Corning, Project Manager, shared that the goal of the meeting today was to review and discuss the drafted language for Articles 1, 2, and 3. The draft language was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Member Kai Long shared concerns and frustrations about making sure that going forward there is more diversity as well as more democracy within government.

Elizabeth Corbo from the Collins Center reminded Committee members that there is plenty of opportunity going forward with the Charter to recognize and adjust the language involving citizen engagement and the change Committee members wish to see.

Member Lisa Peterson shared that she agreed with comments made by Kai Long and stressed that the Committee can make change, but to make sure they also identify what the purpose of that change is.

Member Ellen Shachter shared that it would be a good idea for the Committee to have more creative thinking moving forward and was open to suggestions on how the Committee can accomplish the goals they are setting.

Member Lisa Peterson asked The Collins Center if there was a campaign finance reform that could be put in place in the Charter. Elizabeth Corbo shared that this topic is something that is very difficult to address and would have to consult with the City Solicitor and the State regarding it. Lisa Peterson suggested that it is something that the Committee and Collins Center should investigate more to try and include in the Charter.

Member Mina Makarios offered comments and suggestions on Council turnover and shared they agreed with some of the comments made by previous members, but wants to be mindful in the language that is used as to not flood the candidate pool with an already confusing voting process and low voter turnout.

Member Jim Stockard asked for clarification on how much money can be donated by a person to a campaign and if there is a limitation on how much one person is able to donate. Patricia Llyod from the Collins Center shared that campaign financing is very heavily regulated by the State, making it difficult for municipalities to make policies that do not conflict with State law.

Member Jennifer Gilbert shared that they agree with comments made by Member Long and offered comments on government participation and leadership positions, noting that those in charge of decision making is an important discussion.

Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo shared that a section in the draft Articles that they have been focusing on is communication, and offered suggestions on how the Committee can reach out to

specific communities and age groups to achieve the goals that are being set by Committee members to have a progressive conversation on what needs to be changed.

Member Nikolas Bowie referenced and offered comments from the Massachusetts Constitution that describes the powers that local governments have.

Anna Corning asked Committee members to share topics they wish to have more information on for future meeting discussions.

The Chair, Kathleen Born offered comments on the challenges of being on the City Council and running a campaign while also working full-time and suggested that City go back to having City Councillors be part-time positions.

Member Kevin Chen shared that they would like to have conversations around how to make elections more understandable to the public and would like to see more expansion on the communication and engagement side of elections. Member Chen suggested using municipal local media as a tool for outreach.

Member Ellen Shachter noted the importance of having data to help with the decision-making process.

Member Kai Long shared that running for City Council is limited to a selected group based on resources and privileges. Member Long suggested using language in the Charter that would reflect having different demographics be a part of City politics and having a town hall that could be broadcast to residents.

Member Mosammat Faria Afreen shared that she chose to be a part of the Charter Review Committee to represent the groups that they are a part of. Member Afreen shared concerns about the decision making and conversations within the Charter, noting that they feel some of the decisions that have been made are only making it easier for those already involved in government and not to help those who may want to pursue being involved. Member Afreen suggested that having a citizen's assembly could be beneficial for residents and noted that they would like to have Committee meetings that are not just through Zoom, but in person, to promote more engagement with the public.

Anna Corning reminded members that discussions have mostly been around the legislative and executive branches of the Charter and plans to have conversations about engagement and other Articles in the Charter have not been covered yet.

Member Patrick Magee offered suggestions and examples of ways to change the demographics of the government and promote more diversity.

Member Jessica DeJesus Acevedo noted they would like to see more conversation and information on property, facilities, and procurement (Article 3, Section 3-2) and shared their frustration with the cost of living in the City of Cambridge.

Elizabeth Corbo shared that community engagement is a topic that the Collins Center has been working on to provide information to the Committee to help with draft language. Elizabeth

Corbo also noted a tool that can be used for residents is a class or seminar on how a specific local government is run.

Member Nikolas Bowie summarized the frustrations that they are hearing from fellow Committee members, which were representative government and the representation of marginalized communities, and offered suggestions on how the Committee can work towards changing them and achieving other goals.

Member Kai Long offered the suggestion of having City Councillors mentor and educate those who are interested in running for City Council.

Member Mina Makarious offered suggestions on ways the Charter can reflect public participation.

Member Ellen Shacter shared comments on creating legislation and noted some of the challenges that can be faced when creating and proposing language.

The Chair, Kathleen Born suggested that there be more conversation on citizen assemblies and agrees that it could be beneficial for the City.

Member Jim Stockard offered comments on creating legislation and questioned what the political piece would be on why the Committee would receive a no from the State when bringing language forward. Member Ellen Shachter responded by sharing their own experience.

Anna Corning shared that moving forward it the Committee will start to prioritize conversations around topics they wish to change and implement to be mindful with time while creating smart goals.

Member Mosammat Faria Afreen asked for clarification on what the process would look like when discussing form of government again and making the final proposal to submit to the City Council. Anna Corning responded by sharing that there will be time before the Committee starts drafting the final proposal report, but noted that if anyone in the Committee is interested in revisiting the topic sooner rather than later, time can be made during a meeting for it. Anna Corning shared that they would create an updated timeline for future meeting discussions.

Member Max Clermont shared that they were in favor of having more conversations around citizen assemblies and what could be included in the Charter. Member Clermont suggested looking at town forms of government as a guide to help form town hall meetings and citizen assemblies.

Member Nikolas Bowie shared advantages of having a resident assembly.

Member Mina Makarious suggested Cambridge model the good things that come out of a citizen assembly and use language to stay away from things that would not benefit having an assembly.

Member Jennifer Gilbert shared that they agree with comments made by Committee members and noted she would be in favor of having more conversations around citizen assemblies and discussing representation.

Anna Corning thanked everyone for their participation and urged members to bring forward any information they would like to see in future discussions. Anna Corning also asked Committee members to provide any written feedback they may have regarding Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the drafted Charter language.

**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. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/547?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=19fedbcff01a6c472a317f6b537c4fa1](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/547?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=19fedbcff01a6c472a317f6b537c4fa1)