



CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

MARCH 22, 2023

3:00 PM

SULLIVAN CHAMBER

~MINUTES~

MEETING

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

TIME

3:00 PM

PRESIDING OFFICER

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Mar 22, 2023 3:00 PM (Submission of the Record)

THE CITY COUNCIL WILL HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING IN ORDER TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE CHARTER REVIEW

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Carlone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3:07 PM
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3:07 PM
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING**

March 22, 2023

A Special Meeting of the Cambridge City Council was held on March 22, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by the Honorable Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via zoom.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui called the meeting to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll. City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.

Councillor Burhan Azeem – Present/Remote & In Person
Councillor Dennis J. Carlone – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Marc C. McGovern – Absent *
Councillor Patricia Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor E. Denise Simmons – Absent
Councillor Paul Toner – Absent*
Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present-6. Absent-3. Quorum established.

***Councillor McGovern joined at 3:07 p.m. and was in person. Councillor Toner joined at 3:07 p.m. and was remote.**

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui noted that the purpose of this Special Meeting is to receive an update on the work of the Charter Review Committee.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized the following individuals who offered comments relative to the Charter Review. Each was allowed up to three minutes to speak.

James Williamson, Churchill Avenue, Cambridge noted the lack of democracy, spoke in favor of an elected Mayor with power, and asked that a survey be done.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, called for more democracy and asked that the City Council give the Charter Review Committee the additional time they are requesting to do their work.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui noted that before the City Council is a communication received from the Chair of the Charter Review Committee, Kathleen Born transmitting a letter and report, and a copy of the presentation. The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui also noted that the City Clerk had provided copies of the recently ordained Municipal Ordinance related to the Charter Review Committee. Mayor Siddiqui acknowledged the Charter Review Committee and expressed her gratitude for their commitment and the work they have accomplished to date, noting that they have taken on a daunting task.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Charter Review Committee Chair, Kathleen Born who introduced Project Manager Anna Corning and Michael Ward, Director of the Collins Center, and Associate Elizabeth Corbo from the Collins Center. Chair Born also acknowledged members of the Charter Review Committee who were present including Lisa Peterson, Kaleb Abebe and Patrick Magee.

Chair Kathleen Born provided the City Council with an update noting how the Committee has moved forward with its work and what remains to be done. Chair Born expressed her gratitude to the Committee members and congratulated the Council on selecting an amazing group that truly represents the diversity of Cambridge. Chair Born turned it over to Anna Corning who made a presentation that was provided to the public in advance of the meeting and shown on the screen. Copy attached.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui asked if the Committee had guiding questions for the Council like what they had for the School Committee. Chair Born indicated that she thought Councillors would have their own questions formulated.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor McGovern who had questions related to the recently passed ordinance. Mayor Siddiqui and Councillor Nolan responded.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Zondervan for comments and questions. Councillor Zondervan thanked the Committee for their work and taking on this daunting assignment. Councillor Zondervan asked if there was consideration being given to having additional elected bodies. Director Ward responded noting various government structures in other communities. It was also noted that various boards and commissions could be elected bodies. Councillor Zondervan also asked what the discussion has been around an elected executive. Chair Born noted that there has been conversation around the City Manager Executive Form of Government versus a strong Mayor and models for a strong city that would include having a Chief Executive Officer or a Chief Operating and Financial Officer. Representatives from the Collins Center also responded. Councillor Zondervan asked if a traditional strong Mayor form of government was still in the mix of options being considered. Chair Born and the team responded that it was.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan for comments and questions.

Councillor Nolan asked Chair Born to convey to every member of the Committee her appreciation and acknowledgment of the important work that they are doing and the investment of time and emotional energy they are giving. Councillor Nolan asked what the public input process has been to date and what support the Committee needs to have an even more robust public input process moving forward. Councillor Nolan also asked about the balance of power and the role of the executive and the legislative branch. Councillor Nolan noted that she would love for the City Council to have the same power and authority as the School Committee has relative to the budget. Chair Born responded noting that there was an entire meeting devoted to the budget. Director Ward also responded noting that the Committee did talk about City Council authority over the budget and the nuances between the City Manager and the City Council and the current challenges. The Charter Review Team did note that a recurring theme in the public testimony and amongst committee members is the feeling that the budget is a bit of a mystery process, and a better informed and more involved public would be seen as adding a democratic feature to the budget system. Councillor Nolan also asked about having At-Large Councillors versus Ward or District Councillors or having a combination. Councillor Nolan also asked about the implications of having a longer term and a large student population. The Charter Review Team noted that these matters are being discussed and they have had a presentation from the Elections Commission.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Toner for comments and questions.

Councillor Toner stated that it is his hope that through this process we do no harm and that as we go forward, we try to make sure that we keep the best of what we have in our form of government and do some cleaning up. Councillor Toner noted that he thinks having a City Manager and an elected City Council that hires and fires the City Manager is best, noting that this is where the Council's authority comes from. Councillor Toner also noted that at one time he thought District Councillors would be better, but he has changed his position in favor of At-Large Councillors as it requires a city wide view versus just focusing on one neighborhood. Councillor Toner asked about the timeline as he could not read that part of the materials, and if the recommendations would come one at a time or as a package. Chair Born responded noting that the report details the need to request an extension until the end of December, 2023. Anna Corning responded that it will be up to the Committee as to how they choose to present their recommendations.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Marie Saccoccio, Cambridge, MA who provided public comment and asked that the City Council grant the extension being requested.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Azeem who made a motion to close public comment.

City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Yes

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone – Yes

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon – Yes

Councillor Marc C. McGovern – Yes
 Councillor Patricia Nolan – Yes
 Councillor E. Denise Simmons – Absent
 Councillor Paul Toner – Yes
 Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan – No
 Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui – Yes
Yes-7, No-1, Absent-1. Motion Passed.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Carlone for comments and questions.

Councillor Carlone responded to the comment made during public comment regarding elected officials serving on the Charter Review Committee. Councillor Carlone stressed that no current elected officials are on the Committee and there is only one former elected official on it. Councillor Carlone asked Chair Born about the Mayor/Manager memo, looking at accreditation of relationships and noted that what he has noticed is that so much depends on who the Manager is and the direction the Manager provides to staff. Councillor Carlone stressed the importance of Councillors having access to the experts. Councillor Carlone also raised the issue of having a Planning Board that is elected versus one that is not. Councillor Carlone noted that who are in the various positions, City Manager and Councillors, make the biggest difference but that it is important to have a structure in place that is clearer. Councillor Carlone stated that with the new City Manager, communication is much more regular.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Azeem for comments and questions.

Councillor Azeem noted how excited he was about this meeting. Councillor Azeem noted that he sees democracy through a particular lens noting the difference in the number of individuals who vote in a gubernatorial election versus a municipal election. Councillor Azeem asked how to get those who do not vote in municipal elections more involved and specifically about having even municipal elections in even years, along with non-municipal elections. Chair Born thanked Councillor Azeem for the questions and acknowledged that the Committee had received his letter about this. Chair Born noted that the Committee is cataloguing all the written correspondence it has received and it is on the website. Chair Born deferred to Director Ward who noted that he was not an election expert, but they have been doing research on this issue. Director Ward noted that they have been looking at whether a vote for a charter change could take place on the same day as state and federal elections in November 2024 and the answer is yes. Director Ward noted that with a Special Act, this could be done, however it would have to be done on a separate, physical ballot because you cannot put a charter question on a state and federal ballot. Director Ward noted that the same concern is applicable to regular municipal elections on an even numbered year, further noting that the Secretary of State's Office which oversees managing election law would not be particularly open to the idea of having a single ballot with state, federal and municipal questions on it. Director Ward noted that they might be open to it if there were separate ballots but that creates operational and logistical challenges. It was also noted that because Cambridge elects based on proportional representation there would also need to be different software and equipment at each polling place and current locations might not be large enough to run two separate operations. It was noted that this would be even further complicated

if the City had different voting eligibility requirements than did the state or federal government. Councillor Azeem thanked everyone for their good work and encouraged their continued efforts to increase involvement in local government. Councillor Azeem asked if consideration was being given to adding a solicitor to the list of City Council employees. Councillor Azeem also asked about the role of the Mayor, as the President of the City Council, noting that Councillors often have different views and asking if a City Council President has more power around how policy orders are managed, noting that in Boston, the City Council President has more power than the other Councillors. Councillor Azeem also noted his support for longer terms.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Vice Mayor Mallon for comments and questions.

Vice Mayor Mallon thanked Chair Born and the rest of the members for their work, especially since there is no roadmap guiding them on how to do this. Vice Mayor Mallon stated that an extension of time seems necessary and critical to the work the Committee has been charged with. Vice Mayor Mallon asked how the Committee is receiving input from the public. Chair Born noted that there are several ways that the Committee has sought public input including offering an opportunity for public comment at every meeting. It was also noted that the Committee accepts written comments by email and that there have been meetings with several community groups and neighborhood groups throughout the City. Chair Born noted that the Committee has also hosted two public forums; one that was in person and another that was virtual. Chair Born noted that going forward there will be a series of public forums that are more topic specific and there will be specific surveys as the Committee gets closer to knowing what the specific questions will be. Vice Mayor Mallon noted that she hopes there will be a much larger reach with an online survey to reach the broader public including those who do not typically come forward to offer input on matters. Vice Mayor Mallon noted that she is interested in understanding what the public wants relative to Ward/District Councillors versus At-Large Councillors, or a combination of both. Vice Mayor Mallon also asked what the road map looks like between now and December 31, 2023. Chair Born noted that Committee Member Max Clermont joined the meeting. Chair Born responded to Vice Mayor Mallon noting that she and the Committee are acutely aware of the need for public input and turned it over to Project Manager Anna Corning to review the timeline. Project Manager Corning reviewed the timeline that was included in the report and indicated that she would send out an Excel document that was easier to read. Vice Mayor Mallon again talked about the importance of public input and noted the effectiveness of using Co-Organize related to the process for hiring a new City Manager.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor McGovern for comments and questions.

Councillor McGovern noted he believes in the dedication of the Committee to getting a rich set of diverse voices from across the City and agrees with Vice Mayor Mallon's comments related to the need for additional outreach. Councillor McGovern noted the challenges involved in getting people to participate on this topic and suggested using the Community Engagement Team from the Department of Human Services that has deep connections with various folks with diverse backgrounds. Councillor McGovern said if in the end, 90% of the people who are commenting look like him, we have failed.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Zondervan. Councillor Zondervan noted that he is torn on the question of an extension because granting an extension would mean that Charter Reform would not be on the ballot this year. Director Ward responded noting that back in the fall the Committee tentatively decided to recommend moving beyond the old Plan E text which has been around since the 1940's and that it would be very hard to do this within the original time frame. Councillor Zondervan noted that it would be helpful to get at least some changes within the original timeline.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan. Councillor Nolan spoke about the matter of timing, noting that she wished this had been more thoroughly thought through at the beginning of the process. Councillor Nolan noted there are many important issues that need to be fully addressed and additional time is needed. Councillor Nolan talked about the intent of voters related to "Boards and Commissions" was that it also includes multi member groups but that is not how it is being interpreted. Councillor Nolan also noted that some City Councils have the authority to approve or disapprove Department Heads and others in City Government, not just the City Manager and it is her hope that the Committee considers this especially regarding the City Solicitor and the Deputy City Manager.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Vice Mayor Mallon. Vice Mayor Mallon said that she wants to be mindful that these are volunteers who signed up for a one year commitment and now they are graciously saying that they will do this for another seven or eight months. Vice Mayor Mallon said she is not disappointed with the timeline being extended because this has been a very thoughtful process and she believes we are right where we need to be.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui noted that she had provided feedback to the Charter Review Committee last week. Mayor Siddiqui reiterated that longer terms are of interest and that she agrees that we need to elicit as much public comment as possible. Mayor Siddiqui noted that the members of the Charter Review Committee are well qualified and diverse with each coming from different perspectives and having different expertise. Mayor Siddiqui also noted that those serving on the Committee are not individuals whose names the Council always sees and there is power in their representation. Mayor Siddiqui noted that serving as the Chair of the School Committee is a big commitment and in other cities where there is a strong Mayor, the Mayor is not always the Chair of the School Committee. Mayor Siddiqui asked if there were an elected Mayor, what else would we want them to be doing? Mayor Siddiqui noted the positions that the School Committee currently has authority over and the positions that the City Council currently has authority over. Mayor Siddiqui noted that it is the task of the Committee to tell the City Council what they think on these issues and then go from there. The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui asked Solicitor Glowa if the Council could vote to approve an extension of time at this Special Meeting and Solicitor Glowa responded that the answer is "yes." Solicitor Glowa recommended language for the motion to grant the extension.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion that the City Council authorize an extension of time for the Special Committee/Charter Review Committee to file its report on suggested Charter changes with the City Council until December 31, 2023.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Zondervan who exercised his Charter Right.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to accept the Committee Report filed by Chair Kathleen Born on behalf of the Charter Review Committee (included fourteen sets of minutes). Copy attached.

City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Yes
 Councillor Dennis J. Carlone – Yes
 Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon – Yes
 Councillor Marc C. McGovern – Yes
 Councillor Patricia Nolan – Yes
 Councillor E. Denise Simmons – Absent
 Councillor Paul Toner – Yes
 Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan – Yes
 Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui – Yes
Yes-8, Absent-1. Motion Passed.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to adjourn. City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Yes
 Councillor Dennis J. Carlone – Yes
 Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon – Yes
 Councillor Marc C. McGovern – Yes
 Councillor Patricia Nolan – Yes
 Councillor E. Denise Simmons – Absent
 Councillor Paul Toner – Yes
 Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan – Yes
 Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui – Yes
Yes-8, Absent-1. Motion Passed.

The Cambridge City Council adjourned at approximately 4:50 p.m.

Attachments:

Committee Report/Documents Submitted by Chair Born to the City Council on behalf of the Charter Review Committee.

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/468?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=27600a447c364a2c46f6a6d599344718.