

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui
Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon
Councillor Burhan Azeem
Councillor Dennis J. Carlone
Councillor Marc C. McGovern
Councillor Patricia M. Nolan
Councillor E. Denise Simmons
Councillor Paul F. Toner
Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan

March 20, 2023

Dear Mayor Siddiqui and Councillors,

You have charged the Charter Review Committee with an important and daunting task. The responsibility of reviewing our City's governing document is something our Committee does not take lightly. We are committed to a thorough, methodical, transparent, and publicly inclusive evaluation of the existing Cambridge City Charter.

Members of our Committee often remark, in one way or another, that our task is at once impossible and essential. We understand that to recommend changes to a working document that has not been thoroughly reviewed in eighty years, to recommend any changes to a form of government which is an essential part of the culture of our city, will take time and careful deliberation. Throughout this process, we have dealt with the odd feeling of simultaneously moving too slowly and too quickly.

It should be noted that, by your design, we are not a committee of experts; we are a committee of ordinary community members, individually and collectively focused on exploring how the government of Cambridge can most fairly and equitably serve its citizens.

Justice and democracy are two words that come up repeatedly in our discussions. As we have indicated in our adopted committee value statement: "This Cambridge Charter Review Committee strives to work effectively and efficiently to produce a recommendation that empowers equitable, just, and democratic opportunities for all individuals who make up our community."

Attached please find the minutes of our fourteen Charter Review Committee meetings to date, along with a report on the Committee's staff, budget, and schedule to date as well as that proposed going forward. Attached, we have provided a brief outline of a working plan for the rest of 2023. We respectfully request a six-month extension to deliver our report to the City Council on December 31, 2023.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Born, Chair
On Behalf of the Cambridge Charter Review Committee

Date: March 20, 2023

To: Cambridge City Council

From: Kathleen L. Born, Chair, Cambridge Charter Review Committee

Re: Interim Report on the Ongoing Work of the Charter Review Committee

Background:

In November 2021, Cambridge voters approved several amendments to the Cambridge City Charter, including the following section which became effective on January 1, 2022:

Section 116(b). Not later than July 1, in each year ending in a 2, the City Council shall provide for a review to be made of the city charter by a special committee to be established by ordinance. All members of the special committee shall be voters of the city not holding elective office. The special committee shall file a report with the City Council within 1 year of its appointment recommending any changes to the city charter which it deems necessary or desirable, unless an extension is authorized by vote of the City Council. Action on any proposed charter changes shall be as authorized by the Massachusetts constitution or general laws.

On July 1, 2022 the City Council appointed the following fifteen Cambridge residents to serve on the Cambridge Charter Review Committee:

Kaleb Abebe

Jessica Dejesus Acevedo

Mosammat Faria Afreen

Kathleen Born (subsequently appointed as Chair)

Nikolas Bowie

Kevin Chen

Max Clermont

Jennifer Gilbert

Kai Long

Patrick Magee

Mina Makarious

Lisa Peterson

Ellen Shachter

Susan Shell

Jim Stockard

Background (Continued):

The Charter Review Committee is a Special Committee of the City Council but no City Council members are members of this Committee.

Charter Review Committee members do not receive stipends or reimbursements. The Committee Members have not been sworn in by the City Clerk. There is no fixed term for the Committee Members. The Committee may be dissolved at the acceptance of its Final Report to the City Council, or the City Council may act to define a date of expiration or to extend the appointments

All regular meetings of the Committee have, to this date, been conducted remotely on Zoom. At this date, it is uncertain whether Zoom meetings of the Charter Review Committee will continue, after the expiration of the Governors' Emergency Orders, to be permitted under the Open Meeting Law.

Staff and Budget

The Collins Center from UMass Boston was contracted through the office of the Mayor from August 2022 to provide consulting services through June 2023.

When the Charter Review Committee was appointed by the City Council, Patrick Hayes, Aide to Councillor Patricia Nolan, and Michael Scarlett, Chief of Staff to Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui were assigned to provide supporting services to the Committee as needed.

The first meeting of the Charter Review Committee was held August 16, 2022. It quickly became apparent that additional dedicated staff would be necessary to meet the operational needs of the Committee (for example the scheduling of the meetings, communications with Committee members, providing public notices of the meetings).

Contributing to the need for additional staff was the Committee's firm resolve, dating from its earliest meetings, to make as broad a community outreach effort as possible. It became immediately apparent that some kind of dedicated online presence was going to be necessary to meet public expectations as well as to serve as a resource for the members of the Committee. Without designated funding for an outside web service, Cambridge's IT department agreed to provide a city webpage. This site requires continuous staff maintenance and update in order to meet the Committee's needs for information and the similar expectations of the public.

Other ongoing outreach efforts include, but are not limited to, soliciting and organizing input from the general public and from important community leaders, including past appointed and elected officials. All of this requires professional staff time to organize and execute.

Anna Corning, who held a similar staff position to the Somerville Charter Review Committee was recommended by the Collins Center. She was interviewed and hired by the City of Cambridge in a part time capacity in mid-October.

Staff and Budget (Continued)

The very capable current team of Anna Corning, Patrick Hayes, and Michael Scarlett (as needed) appears to be adequate, cooperative, congenial, and well-suited for the Charter Review effort, given its current scope. However, if the City Council suggests that a greater level of public input is merited, the Committee may request added staff and funds to cover expenses. There is also the possibility of requesting mediation or dispute resolution services should that be necessary to bring the Committee to agreement at the conclusion of their work.

The Charter Review Committee requested an allocation for miscellaneous expenses associated with public outreach. On March 6, 2023 a budget allocation of \$40,000 was approved by the City Council.

Record Keeping and Open Meeting Law Compliance

Staff from the Cambridge City Clerk's office, typically Nicole Erwin, Clerk of Committees, provide support for all Charter Review Committee and Sub-Committee meetings, providing meeting notes and other records. At the earliest meetings, before Ms. Erwin had joined the Clerk's staff, recording of minutes was provided by Naomie Stephen of the City Council Office.

The Charter Review Committee is considered to be a Special Committee of the Cambridge City Council, subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law (OML), including (but not limited to) quorum requirements, record-keeping requirements, and public notice of any meetings which involve a quorum of the Committee or sub-Committees. The City Law Department provides ongoing advice to the Committee regarding general OML matters. Law Department staff attend the regular meetings of the Committee.

Minutes of the Charter Review Committee and its Planning Sub-Committee

See the attached PDF for all meeting minutes approved by the Charter Review Committee to date.

Charter Review Committee Meeting Dates (Sub-Committee dates as noted) Major Topics of Discussion, Actions Taken

August 16, 2022

Member Introductions

Introduction of Collins Center Staff and Description of their Role and Experience

Briefing on Open Meeting Law

September 13, 2022

Presentation by Collins Center Staff

Roberts Rules

Questions from Committee Members

Public Comment

September 29, 2022

Discussion about forming sub-committees to work on agenda-setting and drafting

Collins Center staff on their role in agenda setting

Public Comment

October 25, 2022

Public Comment

Collins Center led discussion on “things that are working well in Cambridge and things that are not.”

Motion to form a Planning Sub-Committee passed unanimously

November 8, 2022

Discussion on major themes drawn by Collins Center from previous meetings

Discussion of a “Values Statement”

Public Comment on major themes

November 22, 2022

Committee “Decision Making Proposal” adopted

Community Engagement Plan

Public Comment

December 6, 2022

Value Statement adopted

Review of Current Cambridge Charter Plan E and Exemplar Modern Charter

Vote to Rewrite Charter

Public Comment

Charter Review Committee Meeting Dates (Sub-Committee dates as noted) Major Topics of Discussion, Actions Taken

December 13, 2022 (Planning Sub-Committee)

Discussion of Agendas for upcoming Committee Meetings and for Public Outreach Meetings

December 20, 2022

Community Engagement Plan

Discussion about: What is working about the city council / manager form of government? What are the challenges about the city council / manager form of government? Should the city form of government stay the same or change?

Public Comment

January 3, 2023

Planning for Panel of Current and Past distinguished Massachusetts Mayors and City Managers

Additional Planning for Community Engagement

Presentation by Collins Center of “Example Baseline Cambridge Charter in Modern Format”

Public Comment

January 17, 2023

Update on Community Engagement Efforts

Presentation from City of Cambridge Current Finance and Budget Team on the current process for setting the city budget. Q&A from Committee Members

Collins Center Memo regarding budget articles in charters. Discussion of options.

Public Comment

January 27, 2023 (Planning Sub-Committee)

Discussion on Committee Work Plan and Timeline

January 31, 2023

Public Comment

Review Collins Center Memo on Sample Charter Finance Article Language from other Massachusetts cities and town

Presentation from Cambridge Election Commission and discussion

February 7, 2023

Public Comment

Discussion of possible revisions to election format, timing

Discussion of Manager vs. Mayor: How has your perspective shifted as a result of the information and presentations from the last several meetings? What questions and information do you still need to form a decision?

Charter Review Committee Meeting Dates (Sub-Committee dates as noted) Major Topics of Discussion, Actions Taken

February 28, 2023

Public Comment

Chief Executives Panel with remarks by:

Alex Morse current Manager of Provincetown and former Mayor of Holyoke,

Joe Curtatone former Mayor of Somerville,

Eileen Donoghue former Manager and Mayor of Lowell and former State Senator

Q&A with Panelists from Committee Members

Discussion of Committee Timeline

March 14, 2023

Public Comment

Review and Adoption of Amended Project Timeline

Discussion and Q&A with City Manager Yi-An Huang

Summary of Significant Actions to Date

Committee Ground Rules, adopted on November 22, 2022

The committee agrees to the following ground rules that all members will adhere to in deliberation and throughout the review process.

Members will:

Hear all voices; treat one another and our ideas with respect.

Take Space, Make Space. Make space for others to speak and feel comfortable taking up more space if you have not been.

Maintain an open mind, remain learning-focused and flexible to consider other opinions.

Assume good intentions of all committee members and the public.

Collaborate as we work together and continue to build trust.

Work efficiently to build a thoughtful and deliberate review process.

Acknowledge each individual has knowledge, strategies, and comments to contribute.

Respectfully question assumptions and take the opportunity when possible to ask: "Is there any data we might bring in to better inform our decision around this topic?"

To ensure committee members are prepared and able to fully contribute in each meeting the following will be implemented: each meeting and/or agenda item will have defined facilitator(s), parameters and goal, before a vote the issue will be restated clearly and members will have an opportunity to comment or ask questions.

Committee members should email cambridgecharterreview@cambridgema.gov if they cannot attend a meeting, need to leave early or have a schedule conflict.

All communications, whenever possible, should CC cambridgecharterreview@cambridgema.gov, for organizational purposes.

Committee members should feel comfortable discussing their charter review work with the public and members of the press as individual members of the committee, as the goal is to engage with as many stakeholders as possible.

Summary of Actions to Date (continued)

Fist to Five Consensus Decision Tool adopted on November 22, 2022 (later determined by City Clerk to be impermissible with OML)

The committee agreed to use the fist to five voting method to gather a sense of the committee during deliberations and to gauge consensus.

Five: I love this and will champion it!

Four: I'm good with this as is.

Three: I see minor issues we can resolve later.

Two: I see minor issues we need to resolve now.

One: I see major issues we need to resolve now.

Fist: No way, I will block this.

Community Values Statement adopted on December 6, 2022

This Cambridge Charter Review Committee strives to work effectively and efficiently to produce a recommendation that empowers equitable, just, and democratic opportunities for all individuals who make up our community.

Civility We will hold all committee members with equal decision making capabilities and acknowledge the dignity and humanity of the entire community. We will engage each other and the public with respect, tolerance, humility, and open-mindedness throughout the process.

Community We will engage a cross section of the community, focusing on historically marginalized groups, to incorporate interests of people of all income levels who work, live, pray, and learn in Cambridge to ensure an equitable charter. We will seek participation and feedback from residents, community organizations, youth, workers, businesses and other stakeholders in both virtual and in-person spaces and use engagement methods most accessible to them.

Social Justice We will strive to improve Cambridge's Charter by addressing the historical inequities built into the government foundation and power structures, acknowledging that Cambridge was built on land stolen from Indigenous people and built and financed by brutal slavery. We will strive to make the committee's work, communications, and deliberations transparent and available to the public.

Summary of Actions to Date (continued)**A New Charter (not an Edited Charter) is Necessary
Informally agreed upon on December 6, 2022**

The Charter Review Committee agreed that the existing text and format of the Cambridge City Charter needs replacement and not editing. The Collins Center provided samples of contemporary Model Charters as well as an entirely re-written Cambridge Charter that substituted gender neutral language, contemporary idioms, modern titles, and re-organized the chapters into logical topic sections. The Committee decided that drafting new text using contemporary language and a clear structure would be our goal, regardless of whether the changes were minor or major in scope.

Summary of Actions to Date (continued)**Public Outreach Events**

Public Meeting at Main Cambridge Library, January 24, 2023

Zoom Public Meeting, February 4, 2023

Democratic Socialists of America, January 11, 2023

Harvard Square Business Association, February 3, 2023

Porter Square Neighbors Association, February 16, 2023

Cambridge Housing Authority Tenants' Union Leaders, February 21, 2023

East Cambridge Planning Team, February 22, 2023

Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association, February 28, 2023

A Better Cambridge, March 2, 2023

Cambridge City Democratic Committee, March 9, 2023

Cambridge School Committee Round Table, March 14, 2023

Upcoming Events

Cambridge Wards 1 and 2, March 23, 2023

Public Forum, April

Public Forum, June

Public Forum, August

Public Forum, September

Public Forum, November

Interviews with Past and Present Public Officials

Yi-An Huang

Robert Healy

Louis A. DePasquale

Richard Rossi

David P. Maher

Henrietta Davis

David Sullivan

Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler

Arthur Goldberg

Jeffrey Young

Pending

Anthony Galluccio (scheduled)

Michael Sullivan

Ken Reeves (still seeking contact info)

Summary of Actions to Date (continued)**Proposed Committee Timeline adopted on March 14, 2023**

The Charter Review Committee designed and agreed on a proposed timeline to include topic specific committee meetings, committee hosted public forums, and meetings to review draft charter text. The adopted timeline would target the committee work to be complete by the end of December 2023.

Please see attached timeline for details.