

Charter Review Commi Report to City Council

Cambridge Charter Review Committee
March 22, 2023

Overview

Charge of the Committee:

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee has been convened by *Council* to comprehensively review *the City's current charter* and to *recommend changes* to ensure that Cambridge's government meets the needs of our residents and is responsive to the challenges of today and beyond.

Current Stage:

Understanding policy trends, data analysis, other municipality comparisons, engaging with community groups, public input and hearing from former and current city employees and elected officials.

Committee Meetings and Actions

The committee has met biweekly since August 2022

Initial Meetings:

Establishing rules and procedures, guiding priorities for committee work, developing an understanding of the history of Cambridge's charter and in general.

Current Stage:

Understanding policy trends, data analysis, other municipality comparison, engaging with community groups, public input and hearing from former current city employees and elected officials.

Last several meetings focus on form of government – hearing from many city managers of other municipalities and current city manager and elected officials

Committee Meetings and Actions

Actions

- Adopted Committee ground rules
- Adopted Consensus building tool
- Adopted Committee Values Statement
- Recommend to draft new text for charter, regardless of changes to
- Adopted Proposed timeline for committee work

Committee Priorities

Value Statement:

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

Priorities for process and recommendations:

- Enfranchising/Equity
- Participation/Accessibility
- Effectiveness of Government/Collaboration with other entities
- Responsiveness/accountability/transparency
- Legislative functioning/balance of power between legislative and executive branches
- Vision/values/principles

What is included in a Charter?

Charters define the basic foundational structures and powers of a city or town, such as:

- Form of Government (manager, mayor, town meeting, etc)
- Term lengths and/or limits for elected officials
- City Council & School Committee Composition (number of members, at-large vs district representation)
- If roles throughout the city are appointed or elected
- Appointment and confirm process for department heads boards and commissions
- Roles in creation and approval budget
- Election system and requirements
- Administrative organization
- Public Participation Mechanisms

Charter Review Committee Contact Information

Website: www.cambridgema.gov/charterreview

Email: charterreviewcommittee@cambridgema.gov

Virtual Public Committee Meetings Every other Tuesday at 5

We take public comment at the beginning of every meeting and
comments by email.