



GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, RULES & CLAIMS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Government Operations, Rules, and Claims Committee will hold an initial meeting to discuss Charter Review recommendations and develop draft recommendations to the Full City Council for reviewing, deliberating, adopting, and processing possible changes to the Cambridge City Charter for a future vote by Cambridge voters.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Joan Pickett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Government Operations, Rules, and Claims Committee was held on Wednesday, June 5, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Toner. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. 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.

At the request of the Chair Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/Remote
- Councillor Pickett – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 5. Quorum established.

The Chair, Councillor Toner offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss the Charter Review recommendations and develop draft recommendation to the full City Council for reviewing, deliberating, adopting, and processing possible changes to the Cambridge City Charter for a future vote by Cambridge voters. Present at the meeting was Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor, Elliott Veloso, First Assistant City Solicitor, Tanya Ford, Executive Director of the Elections Commission, Ethridge King, Election Commissioner, and Charles Marquardt, Election Commissioner. Diane LeBlanc, City Clerk, was joined via Zoom. Also present at the meeting was Mayor Simmons, Councillor Siddiqui, and Councillor Wilson. Chair Toner noted that Michael Ward from the Collins Center and Anna Corning, Charter Review Project Manager, were also present both in person and remotely, and both were involved in the Charter Review Committee.

The Chair, Councillor Toner opened Public Comment.

Heather Hoffman, 21 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments regarding the set of questions for Committee discussion and the importance of public participation.

Robert Winters, Cambridge, MA, highlighted the importance of public participation and offered comments relative to the Cambridge Charter.

Chair Toner recognized Megan Bayer, Tonya Ford, and their team who gave a presentation titled “Law Department and Election Commission’s Responses to City Council’s Charter Review Questions”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation was in response to procedural and technical questions from the City Council about potential changes to the City’s Charter because of the Charter Review Committee’s final report and recommendations within the report. The Final Report was included in the Agenda Packet as well as a memo from the Law Department in response to Council questions. City staff and Michael Ward were available to respond to questions that were raised during the presentation.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho – Wheeler who made a motion to close public comment.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler- Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

Chair Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who asked if there would be a stipend included for Resident Assembly participants. Elliott Veloso shared that it was recommended by the Charter Review Committee (CRC). The Vice Mayor shared challenges that may arise with trying to create a diverse group of residents to represent the Resident Assembly. Elliott Veloso shared that the Law Department provided similar concerns that were included in the memo.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Azeem who shared that he is interested in hearing from the Chair what the process will look like moving forward. Chair Toner shared that there were questions that were put together in collaboration with the City Solicitor and City Clerk to use as guidance on how the Committee and full City Council can move forward. Chair Toner provided a review of the questions, which were provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. Chair Toner recognized Michael Ward and Anna Corning and asked them to provide a review of the public engagement and education outreach that the CRC conducted. Both were available to respond and provide examples.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who had a question for Michael Ward regarding information on the process going through the State Legislature. Michael Ward shared he agreed with the Solicitor’s Office about the difficulties of predicting a timeline and noted that the City could defer to their own experiences with Home Rule Petitions to help with guidance going forward and provided additional information regarding the Attorney General, the State Legislature, and Home Rule Petitions. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked if the Law Department was in discussion with CRC during their meetings to help guide recommendations. Megan Bayer shared that the Law Department was present at the meeting and available to respond to questions that were brought forward by Committee members. Tanya Ford shared that the Election Commission had a joint meeting with CRC and offered a brief overview of the discussions during that meeting.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Pickett who noted the importance of what the Committee believes their roll should be moving this process forward, noting that it would be helpful if members shared their opinions to the full City Council.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Siddiqui and Councillor Azeem who shared their opinions and suggestions on how the Committee and the full City Council could move forward, noting that down the line a Special Meeting with the full Council may be beneficial to have discussions so all voices can be included.

A member of the public requested that Public Comment be reopened.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who made a motion to suspend the rules to reopen Public Comment.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – No

Vice Mayor McGovern – No

Councillor Pickett – No

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – No

Yes – 1, No – 4. Motion failed.

Chair Toner, Vice Mayor McGovern, and Councillor Pickett explained their reasoning for not opening public comment.

Chair Toner explained what the process and option could look like moving forward to continue the discussion.

Chair Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Azeem, Councillor Pickett, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, and Councillor Siddiqui who all offered comments and suggestions on how they would like to see the discussion moving forward and what the roll of the Committee and Council are. Chair Toner stressed the importance of Councillors reaching out to community members, so they are aware of the discussions happening around the Cambridge Charter.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho – Wheeler who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler- Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

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/768?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Councillor Toner, transmitting the meeting agenda and questions for discussion.

A communication was received from Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor, transmitting a legal opinion in response to the Charter Review Committee's Final Report and the Process for Reviewing and Acting on those Recommendations.

A communication was received from Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor, transmitting a presentation relative to the City Council's Charter Review questions.

A communication was received from Councillor Toner, transmitting questions regarding Charter Review recommendations and process.

A communication was received from Councillor Toner, transmitting a link to a YouTube video providing history of the Cambridge Charter.

That the Final Report of the Charter Review Committee be referred to the Government Operations, Rules and Claims Committee. CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY MAYOR SIMMONS IN COUNCIL FEBRUARY 12, 2024

A communication was received from Councillor Toner, transmitting Chapter 2.02, Section 2.02.100 of the Municipal Code.

A communication was received from Councillor Toner, transmitting The Charter Review Committee Final Report.