



# CIVIC UNITY COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, September 29, 2022

5:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**The Civic Unity Committee shall meet to discuss the two August 1, 2022 policy orders exploring ways to improve the lives of Cambridge's African American/Black Residents**

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Carlone	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Civic Unity Committee was held remotely on September 29, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 5:00p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Simmons. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by the Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, the public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

**At the request of the Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

**Councillor Carlone – Present/Remote**

**Vice Mayor Mallon – Present/Remote**

**Councillor Simmons – Present/Remote**

**Councillor Toner – Absent**

**Councillor Zondervan – Present/Remote**

**Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.**

The Chair, Councillor Simmons offered opening remarks and noted that the call of the meeting was to discuss the two August 1, 2022, Policy Orders exploring ways to improve the lives of Cambridge's African American/Black Residents. Councillor Simmons shared that Mayor Siddiqui and Councillor McGovern were present at the meeting, as well as Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for the Department of Human Services (DHSP) along with her team member Michelle Farnum, Assistant Director of Child Youth & Family Services. Cambridge Police Commissioner, Christine Elow, was also present.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons gave an overview of the two Policy Orders from the August 1, 2022, which were POR 2022 #138 and POR 2022 #139, which were provided in the Agenda Packet in advance of the meeting. Councillor Simmons thanked Dr. Isaac Yablo, Founder and Principal Consultant of Yablo Consulting, LLC, who provided a memo on proposals to policy

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recommendations to address the state of African American and Black residents in Cambridge. The memo was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Zondervan who offered comments on racial discrimination and marginalization and noted that there is a systemic challenge that people face daily. Councillor Zondervan stressed the importance of recognizing and making change towards the difficult challenges that Black men and children face. Councillor Zondervan noted that the goal was to establish a Commission to have an ongoing place to continue a broad discussion on racism and how it impacts everyone in the City and to create more permanent solutions to address issues in effective ways.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Isaac Yablo who gave a background of his involvement within the Black community and shared his experiences in Cambridge as a Black male.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Carlone who thanked Isaac Yablo for his work and shared that he believes the Council and the City Manager will work hard to create a Commission to provide the important discussions that are needed to promote positive solutions to the Black community in Cambridge.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor McGovern, who noted the importance of raising more awareness in the City around racial discrimination in the City and thanked Isaac Yablo for all of the work and time he has dedicated to making change.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who shared her support for having a Commission in the City that focuses on Black men and children.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Zondervan who noted that he was in favor and would support a Commission, Task Force, and Racial Justice and Equity Commission to help the Black community in Cambridge to address the issues and challenges that people of different backgrounds face.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons shared her experiences from when she made a visit to Harlem and offered comments on the programs that were provided to the Black community and Black men that she believes would be helpful to promote in Cambridge. Isaac Yablo agreed with comments made by Councillor Simmons and shared that sometimes the government forgets to strengthen programs that are already happening in the community. They noted that there is a lot more room for impact in the metropolitan area. Councillor Simmons noted the importance of managing the programs that already exist by pushing for more funding and improving them to reach City goals and by also using available resources to create a platform for the Commission to have a good foundation.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Ellen Semonoff who agreed with comments made by Councillor Simmons and Isaac Yablo and offered comments on the Council moving forward with a Commission and a Task Force. Ellen Semonoff shared how DHSP runs some of their programs based on a lottery service which reflects a family income, noting that more than 80% of families that identify as Black or African American applied and were considered high priority.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Michelle Farnum who offered information on Cambridge Youth Programs and the connection with the Black community, especially young Black men, and boys, and how data collected within the programs on both members and staff helped DHSP promote stronger services within that community.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Tyrell Dortch, Interim Director for the Moses Youth Center in Cambridge, who offered comments on the programs that are offered to young Black men and boys of color in Cambridge, noting that many of the programs are there to offer leadership and empowerment skills to help young men grow to become positive members of the community. Tyrell Dortch also noted that these programs provide a safe space for members to learn more about themselves and society.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Zondervan who thanked Tyrell Dortch for all the hard work that is put into the programs and shared that he appreciates these services that are provided. Councillor Zondervan shared that it is exciting to see that the City already has successful programs, but asked how can the City move forward with more services to address the issues.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan recognized Mayor Siddiqui who thanked Isaac Yablo for his work and noted that they are excited to see where the City can do more work to be more successful and intentional on this topic.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons offered closing remarks and noted the importance of improving change in Cambridge. Councillor Simmons noted that her goal is to work with her colleagues and community partners to see what ideas and programs will look like moving forward by having a holistic approach towards Black success.

**The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who made a motion to close public comment.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

**Councillor Carlone – Absent**

**Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes**

**Councillor Simmons – Yes**

**Councillor Toner – Absent**

**Councillor Zondervan – No**

**Yes – 2, No – 1, Absent – 2. Motion failed.**

**The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

**Councillor Carlone – Absent**

**Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes**

**Councillor Simmons – Yes**

**Councillor Toner – Absent**

**Councillor Zondervan – Yes**

**Yes – 3, No – 0, Absent – 2. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:15p.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/326?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=84c93e7f770d824f88fd0dde089c6e08](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/326?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=84c93e7f770d824f88fd0dde089c6e08)

**Policy Order re Establishing a Task Force on Cambridge's African American/Black Residents**

**Black Men and Boys Commission**