



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

October 24, 2022

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Re: Response to Awaiting Report No. 22-25 of 4/25/22 *Re: Report on How the City can Meet the Goals for Diversity and Inclusion While Ensuring that Any Required Professional Expertise and/or Specific Knowledge that May be Statutorily Required will Continue to be Represented; and*

Response to Awaiting Report No. 21-52 of 6/28/21 *Re: Report on examining stipend models for the City's multi-member board and commission bodies.*

I am strongly committed to ensuring that board and commission appointments are made in an equitable and transparent manner, that the membership of these groups represents the diversity of the Cambridge community, and that we create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members and the public. This response will address five items of inquiry in AR No. 22-25 in the order which the City Council presented them for ease of reference (with AR No. 21-52 being addressed in Section V. Stipends).

I should note that the focus of this response is the group of boards and commissions where all or some members are subject to City Council approval. In conjunction with this report, City staff have prepared a series of charts (**Attachment A**) which provides detailed information about all the boards, commissions, task forces, working groups, and advisory committees that have been identified in the City of Cambridge. Charts 1 and 2 of Attachment A identify the twenty-four (24) Boards and Commissions where all or some members are subject to City Council approval. Chart 3 of Attachment A also identifies three (3) groups, the Housing Authority, Redevelopment Authority, and Industrial Development Financing Authority, that, while not Boards or Commissions, already have members that are appointed by the City Manager subject to City Council approval as required under state law. The remaining thirty-five (35) boards, commissions, task forces, and working groups do not have members subject to City Council approval.

I. Recruitment

Developing a standard operating procedure for recruiting candidates to Boards and Commissions which is better aligned with current City staff recruitment standard operating procedures, including but not limited to: where to advertise and for how long, in what languages, what personal criteria should be added to the application process to ensure diversity (gender, age, race, ethnicity, rent/owner, etc.)



In 2021, an outside consulting firm, Working Ideal, completed its report on the City's *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Workforce Plan for Recruitment, Hiring, and Promotion (RHP) Project* (RHP Report), which assessed the City's recruitment, hiring, and promotion (RHP) practices through a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens and made recommendations related to improving structure, practices, policies, and culture. The workplan associated with implementing these improvements is scheduled to be ongoing through 2024.

While the RHP Report is specifically focused on City employees, many of the recommendations- such as those around structuring recruitment and selection, developing diverse screening and interview panels, ensuring a diverse slate of applicants, and reducing potential barriers created by the wording of job postings - are directly transferable to supporting diverse boards and commissions. In addition to the recommendations referenced in the RHP Report, others will be further developed as the workplan is implemented.

A. Draft a Clear and Inclusive Posting

Below are some guidelines that have been established for recruitment to boards and commissions. These guidelines have been informed in part by the principles articulated in *Ten-Point Job Description Best Practice Checklist* (Working Ideal, 2022) (**Attachment B**). Our intention is to develop and implement a policy that reflects these objectives, which we expect to do in 2023.

- Use the clearest, simplest language possible in the posting
 - Provide a description of the board or commission's mission, scope, duties, and responsibilities,
 - List any conditions or requirements applicable to membership on the board or commission,
 - Be sure anything listed as "required" is truly necessary for an individual to serve.
 - Highlight particular interests, skills, or other conditions that would be helpful to the applicant in order to serve on the board or commission, and
 - Include the following Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement in all postings:

The City is committed to advancing a culture of antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion(1). All

(1) Antiracism is an active commitment to dismantling institutional structures, beliefs and behaviors that perpetuate inequity based on race. It is the practice of opposing the devaluing of human beings at the individual, interpersonal, and systems levels.

Diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, values, and beliefs as assets to groups and organizations in which they interact.

Equity is the presence of impartial access to opportunities, resources, and supports and the absence of disparities, biases and barriers that are systematically associated with social and historical advantage and disadvantage.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and have unobstructed access to participation. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and values all people in words and in actions.

board and commission members in Cambridge must have the ability to work and interact effectively with individuals and groups with a variety of identities, cultures, backgrounds, and ideologies.

Women, minorities, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

B. Where to Advertise

- City's home page,
 - The board or commission's webpage on the City website,
 - Notice of the initial posting in the City's daily email (which currently reaches 16,000 subscribers)
 - Postings in local newspapers and social media, and
 - Outreach to the City's neighborhood groups, community partners, and local businesses as appropriate to the board or commission.
- Based on the demographic composition of current membership and/or the diversity of responses to initial outreach, the City Manager or their designee may require more targeted outreach to diverse professional and community organizations.

C. Length of Posting Period

In general, board and commission vacancies will be posted for 30 days. However, this posting period may be shortened in cases where having qualified members in sufficient numbers to maintain a quorum is vital to avoid legal penalties that may be incurred due to the board or commission's failure to act in a timely manner.

D. Language

The City continues to build on the work of the Family Policy Council to support language justice, which is the right to understand and be understood in the language in which a person is most comfortable. The City recently hired a full-time Language Access Manager in the Cambridge Human Rights Commission's new Language Justice Division. The Language Access Manager will provide support and collaborate across City departments to produce tools and deliver training for City staff and to ensure that best practices are utilized. While there are no plans to post board and commission vacancies in languages other than English at this time, the City Manager's Office will actively collaborate with the Language Justice Division to ensure that the boards and commissions process reflects any new language practices that may be developed.

E. Demographic Information

The City is assessing how to request and utilize demographic information in the board and commission application process. The City has developed a working draft *Standard Demographic Battery* (**Attachment C**) to improve the quality and consistency of the demographic data collected across City surveys. This battery has been approved as a set of best practices by Cambridge's Data Governance Committee and will be widely accessible to City staff through the soon-to-be launched internal Data Services Portal. The questions have also been pre-loaded into the City's enterprise account survey software so they can be easily added to public facing surveys. This demographic battery was used as a framework for *Demographic Section to the Boards and Commission Application*. (**Attachment D**). Answering questions is voluntary.

F. Screening and Interviewing Applicants

After the close of the posted application deadline and receipt of all applications, the City Manager's Office will send all applicant packets to the applicable department representative. The department will arrange for a diverse screening committee to screen applications and to recommend candidates for interview. The City's interview panels will also be composed, to the extent practicable, to reflect the diversity of the City's government and what is being sought for each board and commission. Prior to finalizing the screening and interview panel, the department will receive confirmation from the Director of Equity and Inclusion that the panel meets the City's expectation for diversity.

Additionally, prior to conducting interviews with recommended applicants, the department will forward the list of candidates to the Director of Equity and Inclusion so the diversity of the slate can be reviewed. The definition of a diverse slate is not a fixed number or percentage of candidates in different demographic categories, but rather depends on factors like the current composition of the board, the size of the board or commission, and any affinity focus the board or commission may have.

Should the Director of Equity and Inclusion determine that a department's proposed slate of candidates to interview is not sufficiently diverse, no candidates will be removed; rather, the department will be required to seek additional candidates from more targeted outreach.

II. Onboarding

Developing a comprehensive strategy to provide anti-bias training and onboarding to new Boards and Commission members and exit interviews to members upon leaving.

A. Orientation Packets

It has been the City's past practice to have onboarding, training, and off boarding of board and commission members conducted primarily by department staff. While role-specific training will still be needed and valuable at the department level, certain aspects of these processes will be coordinated by the City Manager's Office going forward.

In the short-term, the City Manager's Office will work with departments to implement introduction packets for all new board and commission members that contain the following documents:

- Important contact information,
- Applicable provisions of state laws, Municipal Code, and any other rules, and regulations applicable to the board or commission (e.g. BZA, Planning Board),
- City's Sexual Harassment Policy,
- City's Workplace Violence Policy,
- Summary of Conflict-of-Interest Law for Municipal Employees, and
- Information about Open Meeting Laws.

All the City's board and commission members, like all the City's employees, must abide by these policies and procedures. Violation of or failure to comply with these policies will be considered grounds for removal and a bar to future service on the City's boards and commissions to the extent legally permissible.

B. Training

The City currently requires that all employees take the following trainings: Preventing Sexual Harassment and Valuing Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (previously called Valuing Diversity). The City will begin to offer these classes to Board and Commission members starting in 2023.

Starting in 2023, the City will begin to offer the following trainings to all employees:

- Identity Awareness and Structural Racism
- Microaggressions in the Workplace
- Unconscious Bias in the Workplace

Any anti-bias training or educational seminars the City conducts with its employees will also be made available to and may be required of the City's board and commission members, resources and personnel permitting. Refusal to participate in any required trainings may be considered grounds for removal and a bar to future service on the City's boards and commissions to the extent legally permissible.

In addition, members of the Law Department will continue to be available to provide training on laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations related to the work of particular boards or commission, conflict of interest and ethics laws, the Open Meeting Law, and the Public Records Law, as they have in past years.

C. Exit Interviews

Starting in 2023, the City will implement a structure to offer voluntary exit interview procedures for board and commission members who voluntarily leave their positions to garner feedback on their experiences. These interviews may be conducted by City staff or by an independent third party contracted by the City. Feedback received will be shared with the City Manager's Office, the Office of Equity and Inclusion, and relevant departments to support process improvements to the administration of boards and commissions going forward.

III. Term Limits

Provide a report of Boards and Commission that have term limits where applicable and a strategy for imposing term limits based on best practices.

A survey of the City's boards and commissions finds that, with certain exceptions, none

impose term limits on their members. The City recognizes the value of fresh leadership and diverse perspectives in its boards and commissions, and the desire is for maximum terms to land around 10-15 years. However, it is not our intention to implement fixed term limits and rather to allow for flexibility around unique circumstances. This could include difficulty in recruiting new candidates or the need for extension given specific leadership or technical capabilities. For instance, the last two years of confronting the COVID pandemic reveal the practical need to retain stable leadership.

IV. Standardization of Appointments

Developing a standardized presentation of appointments and re-appointments to City Council including, but not limited to, number of applicants, length of opening, current demographic breakdown of the Board or Committee, where outreach was done etc.

For each recommended appointment or reappointment forwarded to the City Council, the City Manager will provide:

- A copy of the posting including opening and closing dates,
- A description of outreach done,
- A summary of the screening and interview process including how many applications were received and how many candidates were interviewed,
- A statement from the City Manager describing the efforts that were made to seek a diverse slate,
- A brief biography of each recommended candidate including a description of the particular background, skills, or experience the member contributes to the board or commission,
- The term of the appointment, and a summary of any other current or upcoming vacancies on the board or commission, and what the department's plan is for filling those positions (public posting, additional reappointments). This information is intended to provide the City Council with additional context relating to expected turnover on the board or commission.
- In cases where the City Manager recommends a reappointment to the City Council, the City Manager will also include information about the time the member has already served on the board and commission.

In keeping with best practices around ensuring applicant demographic information is kept private to the extent possible, the City Manager's recommendation will not include specific demographic data on the applicant pool or the board or commission. Many of these groups are so small as to make anonymizing data impossible. Instead, the City Manager will address the diversity of the slate of applicants interviewed as determined by the Director of Equity and Inclusion.

V. Stipends

Exploring ways we can provide stipends to boards and commission members, particularly those who meet more regularly like the Planning Board and Board of Zoning Appeals.

The City acknowledges that members of the Planning Board (PB), Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), and the Historical Commission provide substantial volunteer hours as compared to those

on other boards and commissions. During the period from October 2021 through October 2022, PB held thirty-eight meetings, BZA held twenty-three meetings, and Historical Commission held fourteen meetings. Any of these meetings can last for 3-5 hours and include hours of advance preparation time. By comparison, many other boards and commissions meet for two hours or less, approximately ten times per year.

Things like childcare during meetings and travel to and from meetings can create a barrier for many residents when they consider whether to apply for the Planning Board or the Board of Zoning Appeal as well as other boards and commissions and could potentially limit board and commission member diversity.

A survey of other Massachusetts communities' approach to these types of stipends (**Attachment E**) indicates that the provision of stipends to Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeal members is uncommon but does occur. Perhaps the most relevant comparable community to focus on is Somerville, which provides its Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members a stipend of \$5,943.96 annually.

Cambridge will begin to provide a \$6,000 annual stipend to all Planning Board members starting in January 2023. This stipend is intended to offset the annual out of pocket costs incurred by Board members in connection with participation on the Board.

Cambridge will begin to provide a \$2,500 annual stipend to all Cambridge Historical Commission Members starting in January 2023. This stipend is intended to offset the annual out of pocket costs incurred by Commission members in connection with participation on the Commission.

Cambridge also intends to provide a \$3,500 annual stipend to all full members of the BZA starting in January 2023, assuming the Municipal Code is amended to allow this. This stipend is intended to offset the annual out of pocket costs incurred by Board members in connection with participation on the Board.

Additionally, Cambridge intends to provide a \$2,000 stipend to all associate members of the BZA starting in January 2023 if the Municipal Code is amended accordingly. BZA associate members attend meetings on an as-needed basis when full-members are not available. Previous patterns of participation indicate that this could average 50% of meetings attended by full members.

Because Section 10.12 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance requires that BZA members serve without compensation, the Zoning Ordinance would need to be amended to remove that provision and to authorize providing a stipend to BZA members. The City Solicitor has prepared the attached proposed zoning amendment (**Attachment F**) to allow for the provision of stipends to BZA members. I recommend that the Council adopt it as a City Council zoning petition and refer it to the Ordinance Committee and Planning Board for hearing.

There are other City Boards and Commissions as to which certain statutes, special acts, or ordinances prohibit or limit the City's ability to provide stipends to their members. There is, however, no limitation on providing stipends to Planning Board members, so it is not necessary to amend the Zoning Ordinance or Municipal Code to do so.

The City will continue to evaluate the time involved and barriers to participation in volunteering for other City boards and commissions and may consider allowing for the provision of additional board or commission stipends in the future based on this evaluation.

VI. Concluding Thoughts

The City's boards and commissions have important business to complete on behalf of the Cambridge community and therefore must have sufficient members to ensure that the quorums necessary to complete this business are achieved and staff to support the work of the boards and commissions. Therefore, as we work to develop and implement the process improvements described above, I will continue to submit appointment recommendations for Council approval and request that these recommendations be acted on in a timely manner.

Boards and commissions play a critical role in our civic landscape, and I'm looking forward to further discussions and input on how we ensure that these bodies are healthy, effective, and representative of our diverse community.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yi-An Huang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Yi-An Huang
City Manager

Attachment(s)