



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

Date: December 18, 2023

To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager

Fr: Deidre Travis Brown, Chief of Equity and Inclusion
Carolina Almonte, Acting Executive Director, Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commission

Re: Response to Awaiting Report Item No. 23-40/Policy Order 2023-105 dated June 5, 2023, requesting that the City Manager convene a working group, including representatives from the LGBTQ+ community, city officials, and other relevant stakeholders, tasked with establishing plans for a citywide celebration to mark the 20th anniversary of the legalization of same-sex marriage in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This memorandum has been prepared in response to Awaiting Report No. 23-40/Policy Order 2023-105 dated June 5, 2023, requesting that the City Manager “convene a working group, including representatives from the LGBTQ+ community, city officials, and other relevant stakeholders, tasked with establishing plans for a citywide celebration to mark the 20th anniversary of the legalization of same-sex marriage in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.” Please be advised that staff from the LGBTQ+ Commission and the Office of Equity and Inclusion are working diligently to create a plan and timeline for the citywide celebration to commemorate this momentous occasion and the City’s important role in its history.

A. BACKGROUND

By way of background, on November 18, 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Court found Massachusetts’ ban on same-sex marriage unconstitutional, ruling that the state could not deny the protections, benefits, and obligations conferred by civil marriage to two individuals of the same sex who wish to marry. Massachusetts became the first U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage on May 17, 2004. Cambridge City Hall was the first municipality in the nation to issue same-sex marriage licenses. On the evening of May 16, 2004, the Cambridge City Council hosted a special celebration and reception, and staff at the City Clerk’s Office were ready at midnight to help couples process marriage applications. Eleven years after same-sex marriage was legalized, on June 26, 2015, the same right to marry was extended to couples across the country.

B. PROPOSED PLAN AND TIMELINE

As part of our planning for the 2024 event, we are establishing a working group consisting of staff and members of the LGBTQ+ Commission, staff from the Office of Equity and Inclusion, and staff from Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders. The working group will include input from relevant LGBTQ+



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community members and will seek participation from LGBTQ+ couples who were married on May 17, 2004.

The proposed date of the celebration will be Friday, May 17, 2024. The working group will be tasked with gathering input from community members regarding celebration ideas, including personal stories and experiences related to the passing of same sex marriage.

The working group will also be tasked with planning the celebration, in which the working group will develop a diverse program of events, prioritizing inclusivity and accessibility. As part of the planning, the working group will identify a venue for the main event and a reception, promote LGBTQ+ history before and during the event, and collaborate with local artists, performers, and LGBTQ+ organizations for contributions. To ensure high attendance, the working group will utilize various advertising avenues, including social media, to promote the celebration and engage the community and City employees.

C. WORKING GROUP MEETING SCHEDULE AND COUNCIL UPDATE

The working group will meet monthly from January 2024 through May 2024 to thoughtfully execute the celebration.

- In January 2024, the working group will be confirmed.
- In February 2024, the working group will meet to discuss event planning and collaborations with LGBTQ+ community partners.
- In March 2024, City staff will provide an update to the Council on status of the event planning.
- In April 2024, the working group will finalize the event preparations.
- The event is scheduled for May 2024.

Very truly yours,

Deidre Travis Brown
Chief of Equity and Inclusion

Carolina Almonte
Acting Executive Director