



# Cheryl Watson Fisher, Esq.

## *Cambridge's City Manager*

May 17, 2022

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui and Members of the  
City Council of Cambridge  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

And Randi Frank Consulting, LLC via email to [Randi@randifrank.com](mailto:Randi@randifrank.com)

### **Re: City Manager of the City of Cambridge**

Dear Honorable Members of the City Council and Ms. Randi Frank,

With City Manager DePasquale's pending retirement, you need a leader who can step in and make immediate impacts, forging a new path for the City and protecting the municipality's interests: climate vulnerability, NetZero strategic plan, gender and socio-economic equity, affordable housing, and lifting women- and minority-owned local businesses. I have a 30-year track record in public service as the Assistant City Solicitor for Cambridge, the City Solicitor for Chelsea, and Chelsea's School Counsel and as an added bonus I was raised in Cambridge and lived there most of my life. ***I am uniquely qualified to lead the City as the next City Manager of Cambridge.***

I've spent my life advising two cities and serving as a conduit between leaders, residents, councils, boards, and commissions. Enclosed, you will find my resume that gives insight into my life's work, passion, and accomplishments.

#### **Proven transferable executive competencies include:**

- **Visionary Leadership:** Powerful ability to unify, influence, and accelerate impact by rallying communities, residents, and leaders to buy into long-term strategies.
- **Large-Scale Strategic Planning:** Stabilized housing crisis during the pandemic, working in tandem with City Council, City Manager, and Housing and Community Development Director; **garnering \$1.25M to aid 300+ low-to-moderate income families** obtain representation for housing court.
- **Inspiring Fair and Equitable Processes:** **Underpin legal decisions**, propelling equitable decision-making processes while serving the community through the **Municipal Hearing Office, Human Rights Commission**, and as the **City's Title IX Coordinator**.
- **Relationship Management:** Engage communities, **leveraging innate interpersonal strengths** to build trust and deepen relationships for sustained outcomes.

Given the urgency of your timeline, we should meet to discuss the mission-critical items currently pending on the City's agenda and how we can implement my plan to ensure a successful transition of the City Manager's duties. I look forward to discussing my qualifications; thank you for considering my candidacy.

Sincerely,

/s/ Cheryl Watson Fisher  
Cheryl Watson Fisher, Esq.  
Enclosure



# Cheryl Watson Fisher, Esq.

## *Cambridge's City Manager*

### PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ♦ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ♦ POLICY EXECUTION

**Fiercely Committed Public Servant, Enterprising Executive Leader, and Respected Litigator** with over 30 years of experience acting in the best interest and protecting the rights of Cambridge and Chelsea municipalities. Deliver razor-sharp legal, financial, and business leadership. Trailblazer, chief legal counsel, and **authority on union and labor policies**; defending against legal actions, prosecuting violations, and providing city officials—the Mayor, City Council, boards, and commissions—with critical insights to drive key initiatives. *Extraordinarily qualified for the esteemed position as the City of Cambridge's City Manager.*

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

**Municipal Government Administration ♦ Union and Labor Relations ♦ Capital Project Management ♦ Risk Management ♦ Budgeting ♦ Project Management ♦ Infrastructure Developments ♦ Cross-functional Collaboration Financial Analysis and Management ♦ Policy Creation and Implementation ♦ Economic Development ♦ Team Building ♦ Process Optimization ♦ Decision-making and Judgment ♦ Environmental Management**

### EXECUTIVE STRENGTHS

↪ **Promoting Housing Stability:** Instrumental in stabilizing housing crisis during the pandemic by establishing the Chelsea Housing Legal Clinic. Worked in tandem with Chelsea's City Council, City Manager, and Housing and Community Development Director; obtained \$1.25M to aid 300+ low-to-moderate income families gain representation for housing court. ↩

↪ **Unique experience in city charter reviews;** conducted comprehensive study of Chelsea's charter provisions, serving the community by delivering impactful legal and policy adoption advice. ↩

↪ **Demonstrating Fiscally-responsible Leadership:** Steer financial decisions managing \$1.3M annual budget for four departments—Judgments, Insurance, Legal, and Licensing—tightening financial controls, and providing fiscal stability. ↩

↪ **Developing and Engaging the Community:** Revived city-wide celebration, Chelsea Day, bringing the City closer amidst the pandemic; attracted thousands of residents and visitors to support local businesses and build relationships while catalyzing Chelsea's social, cultural, economic, and environmental development. ↩

↪ **Promoting Economic Development:** Catapulted licensing revenue growth generating \$6.5M in five years. ↩

↪ **Protecting the City from Excessive Financial Loss:** Won several high-profile, controversial cases, successfully defending the City from non-meritorious claims. ↩

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**City Solicitor | City of Chelsea – Chelsea, MA | November 2003 to Present**

**Assistant City Solicitor | City of Cambridge – Cambridge, MA | May 1999 to November 2003**

*Legal strategist recruited to direct City operations, representing the City and School District in all legal matters. Expanded Licensing Department's capabilities by transforming workflows and integrating technology to modernize systems and processes. Negotiated union policies leading to enhanced safety measures—police body cameras and vaccine mandates.*

*Engage in developing high school youth on legal career pathways. Risk management expert, decreasing the City's and School District's liabilities by implementing risk minimization tactics including early program intervention and scrutinizing legal claims for issues.*

- **Developed and launched City Grows**—web-based licensing platform—centralizing access to the Licensing Administrator, enhancing the licensing experience, expediting renewal process, maximizing compliance, and increasing City's revenue by \$1.2M annually.
- **Underpin legal decisions**, enforcing violations and ordinances as **Municipal Hearing Office**; protect Chelsea residents' civil rights leading the Human Rights Commission; and set the foundation for School District's nondiscrimination policy as the **City's Title IX Coordinator**.
- **Spearheaded creation of the Chelsea Legal Services Housing Clinic**, providing representation to displaced Chelsea residents.
- Reduced the number of insurance claims filed by 36% through effective risk reduction strategies.
- **Conceptualized formation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office**, collaborating with staff to strategize implementation and execution of new department.
- Influential in two significant revisions and **promptly delivered charter updates and legal advice to residents and elected officials on changes to the governmental structure**.
- Achieved timely response of revised COVID-19 contracts.
- Ideated and executed multilingual online appeal process for sanitary code and trash citations, **transitioning city from antiquated technology** and procedures, and enhancing the user experience.

### **Partner | Galluccio and Watson, LLP – Cambridge, MA | November 2010 to Present**

*Extensive experience managing complex civil cases as Founding Member of this Cambridge-based firm. Represent individuals and small companies in employment, real estate, probate, and family law.*

### **Early Career and Prior Positions of Note**

**Assistant City Solicitor | City of Cambridge – Cambridge, MA | 1999 to 2003**

**Assistant Regional Counsel II | Department of Social Services – Commonwealth of MA | 1994 to 1999**

**Field Attorney | National Labor Relations Board – Boston, MA | 1991 to 1994**

## **EDUCATION AND CREDENTIALS**

**Juris Doctor | Boston College Law School – Chestnut Hill, MA**

**Bachelor of Arts in Sociology | Wheaton College – Norton, MA**

## **BOARD MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS**

**Board Member | Central Square Business Improvement District (CSBID)**

**Board Member | Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House**

City Solicitors and Town Counsel Association

Mass Municipal Lawyers Association

Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association

Women's Bar of Massachusetts

Massachusetts Association of School Counsel, *former President*

## **CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MA**

### **CITY MANAGER**

#### **SEMI FINALIST CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Cheryl Watson Fisher

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1. What major factors have motivated you to apply for the Cambridge City Manager position? How does this position fit your overall career goals?

I applied for the position of City Manager of Cambridge because it will be the next step in my public service career and Cambridge is my hometown. As you can see from my resume being a public servant and ensuring that the public is protected and served has been my life work. In 2014, when the City I work for was searching for a new city manager, I volunteered to help lead with the Deputy City Manager. I spent 8 months performing the job and became aware that I am capable of being the leader of a city. As a small business owner in Cambridge and a member of two non-profit boards in Cambridge, I realized that City government is where I would be able to ensure an equitable and transparent administration to lead Cambridge into the future for all residents. The position of City Manager in my experience contributes to the overall quality of life for all of its residents and that is what is motivating me to apply.

2. Tell us how you communicate with your governing body and its individual members (if applicable). Over the years, as I grew in my role as City Solicitor and a member of the Executive Team, I have spent considerable amount of time creating processes for effective communication. At the beginning of each election cycle, there is a training of the elected officials as to each department's goals and procedures. I recommend in that retreat/training we outline of the Council's priorities to set goals and timelines. All Department Heads should be able to meet in public with the Council and its subcommittees to discuss ongoing issues and resolutions. I expect to share weekly reports as to goals and current day-to-day issues with all members of the Council. My intention is to create a position in the City Manager's Office that is responsive to the constituent concerns that Council inquires about.

3. Describe your leadership and management styles with employees - both management level and, if applicable, union representatives.

The overall environment that I strive for in every situation such is a team approach and an overall sense of collaboration. My management style evolved from my experience being a senior management is democratic but transformative team. Democratic is the team approach where everyone participates in the planning and policy-making and have a sense of inclusion in decision-making. By involving everyone early on and creating an environment, whereby results and plans are achieved transforms individuals from their self-interests to achieve team goals. For example, prior to union negotiations, I normally

reach out to Department Heads and managers as to their union employees and sentiments about the collective bargaining agreements. This leads to valuable strategic positions when sitting at the negotiation table with the Unions. I also believe that the Union and Management has to understand each other's positions at the beginning of negotiations.

4. Please explain how you have demonstrated commitment to, and include any accomplished records of, anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and diversity in organizations that you have managed. In 2020 and 2021, I convinced the City Council and City Administration that there was a need for a department for diversity, equity and inclusion in Chelsea. What is interesting is that a City where 70% of the population are people of color there was no sense of inclusion in policies and actions of the local government. And at that time, over 50% of the elected body at that time were people of color. Chelsea has always had a sense that they were inclusionary and diverse but I spent years explaining to them that Chelsea was mainly Latinx and other minority and residents of color communities were not feeling a sense of belonging. I procured training for the executive team and surveyed current staff as to their sentiments. That survey and training provided overwhelming support of the Leadership Team to seek funding for a new DEI department. As the City Attorney, I re-instituted the Human Rights Commission that oversees possible discrimination in private workplaces and other industries such as housing, hospitality and medical centers. The Commission laid dormant for years. As City Solicitor, I have spent years, ensuring that all City rules, ordinances and regulations are enforced fairly and equitably. As the only black member of the Executive Leadership Team in Chelsea for over 18 years, I question each and every policy as it applies to our most marginalized and vulnerable populations to ensure equity and anti-racism.

5. Briefly describe your experience with (1) environmental sustainability-climate change issues, (2) social justice (3) alternative transportation efforts (4) affordable housing and (5) enhancement of the arts.

(1) As City Solicitor of an environmental justice community, I have worked hard to protect the residents of harm by large utilities and Logan airport. My experience has been to question changes made to runways, changes made to electrical substations and most recently informing Eversource that the municipality will not agree to allow diesel generators in the town. As a team, we instituted knowledge-based programs to a community so that everyone can understand climate change. For example, the city is experienced flooding in areas that it had never experience before, and we had community meetings in the area for all residents to see upfront the climate changes through pictures and personal observations.

(2) My experience with social justice has been to participate in litigation as to our Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals (DACA) employees. I created a policy for the school district that no federal agency is allowed on campus or receives information as to our youth and families. The process helps protect the most vulnerable of our residents by changing the way the local system operates. I then instituted a system whereby all information requests or student requests are reviewed by trained staff to prevent the

disclosure of information. This system is not just for our undocumented neighbors but also for our youth of color, because we require our local police department to go through a vetting system prior to receiving information as to our students/youth.

(3) Transportation is unfortunately the game changer for low-income residents and providing services and/or access is difficult when the jobs are not within walking distance. My role has been in the past negotiating a bus/bike lane down the main avenue in Chelsea and working with MassDot to have a bike lane/walking path right next to the Silverline. Residents wanted to use the area as greenspace, and we negotiated an agreement to have the city maintain the area.

(4) My personal experience with affordable housing is that my mother purchased one of the first homeownership units in Cambridge back in 1983 when I was a teenager. My work experience has been to draft affordability restrictions, municipal affordable housing ordinances and am proud of creating the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board in Chelsea. Recently, I recommended, we seek a Home Rule Petition to move foreclosed property into the Trust as another mean to increase affordability units in the city.

(5) In 2018, I re-created Chelsea Day a full day event of the arts celebrating the city. The City Manager tasked all department heads to re-imagine downtown Chelsea to spur economic development and the arts in the city. The event showcased musicians, artists, dancers, and other entertainers spend the day on a big stage downtown Chelsea. I have also sat on the Central Square Business Improvement District from its implementation and have learned about the essential of the arts during the pandemic with those directly involved.

6. What is the largest number of employees you have managed and where? Explain any inordinately high or low staffing level relative to population such as operating an electric utility. The largest number of employees would have been the entire City of Chelsea for approximately 8 months when Chelsea was searching for a new City Manager in 2014. The Deputy Manager was appointed Acting City Manager and he and I worked as a team to ensure a smooth transition so that would have been approximately 400 full-time employees. On a daily basis as both City Solicitor, I have six direct reports but 16 Department/Division heads who all report to me for labor relations, contracts and grants, employee matters and day-to-day operation issues. I also at times, have several principals and school administrators contacting throughout the day as School Counsel.

7. What are the largest operating and capital budgets you have managed and where? Explain any inordinately high or low amount relative to population such as operating an electric utility.

On a day-to-day basis, I am responsible for 3 departmental budgets, however, as City Solicitor I review all contracts and purchase orders which oversees the spending of each department including the school department. The Capital Improvement Plan is a



capital long-term budget and I have in the past sat on that management team. For approximately 8 months in 2014/2015 when the city was searching for a new City Manager, I underwent budget training by fire of the overall City Operational Budget of over 195 million Dollars and the Capital budget was approximately 24 million.

8. In a diverse municipality such as Cambridge how do you ensure that municipal services are delivered equitably to all parts of the community.

Every service must have the priority goal of equity, inclusion and access and that requires a review from the beginning. All of our pamphlets, flyers and communications about a program or service must be in several languages, including braille and for the hearing impaired. That is not enough; many different cultures and languages must understand the program and be able to access the services. I would breakdown Cambridge into sectors and not big sectors to recognize that needs differ from street to street in Cambridge which will ensure that every resident can someone how access services by walking, biking or public transportation. This is a data-driven society, and we should use data to achieve our results such as, whom did we reach and how did we reach them. Having a diverse and multi-lingual staff ensures that residents can feel comfortable seeking out and accepting the services provided.

9. Describe any experience you have which substantiates your ability to create and maintain collaborative partnerships and work productively with outside organizations (public and private).

The community I work in is regionally strong, what that means is that I have cultivated partnerships with agencies and other municipalities to ensure that community projects are recognized across city borders ending with a result of more federal and state funding and intellectual capital. At the outset of my service in Chelsea, collaboration with the private sector had to occur in order to achieve the economic status of today. I have met with hotel developers, large business owners and non-profits in order to spark economic development, affordable housing and social services in the city. I have maintained a relationship with our businesses so when the Pandemic hit the city moved quickly and efficiently. I had to become creative in drafting agreements to fund and operate a Covid hotel/shelter in a nearby community, management contracts for the hotel and leases with empty apartment buildings to temporarily house and care for infected residents. The collaboration with a nearby City and private entities to clean, sanitize and service residents of these newly created housing alternatives required outside organizations to work in partnership with me and my team. Our non-profits helped provide culturally sensitive food and the local hospitals provided Spanish speaking medical staff. It took a many individuals and entities collaborating to create safe spaces to work and reside in our temporary housing.

10. Please describe your economic development experience. Provide measurable results such as number and type of business placements, number of jobs created/saved types of incentives used, etc.

As an attorney for the Urban Renewal board in the community, I have seen more hotels and now biotech come to a small city. I have worked and constructed on Tax incentives to keep a minority owned baking business that employs over 200 residents in the city. I was part of the team that brought known baking company into the city, which created over 50 jobs in manufacturing. By stepping out in front of the marijuana industry, I established a process quickly and smoothly to negotiate Host Community Agreements whereby at least 50% of all staff are residents and now well over 300 youth in Chelsea have jobs in the retail, manufacturing and cultivation of marijuana.

11. Are you currently employed? Yes, and I am self-employed through my private law practice. I am a Partner.

12. What are your salary expectations? My expectations are those outlined in the profile and preferably the high end of the scale.

13. Is the resume that you submitted accurate and current? If not, please explain any discrepancies. Yes, it is accurate and current. I have placed an older name of an organization that I am part of it and its current name.

14. Do you hold any professional certifications? If so, please list. No.

15. If selected as a finalist candidate for this position, we will conduct comprehensive background checks on you. These will include educational degree verification; driving, civil and criminal court record checks; a credit check; internet checks, Sex Offender Registry check and reference checks. Will we find anything concerning you that you need to disclose and explain ahead of time? No.

16. Do you have any unusual personal consideration(s) that would need to be resolved before you could accept this position? If so, please explain. Private practice has to be closed but not a major issue just some wrangling.

17. Have you ever been fired or resigned under pressure from a job? If so, please explain. No.

18. Have you ever sued an employer or been sued by an employer or employee? If so, please explain. No.