

## Proposal: Values Statement

### **Purpose**

The following is a proposed values statement that can work as a guide for the direction of the committee. This statement can be used to convey the priorities of this committee to the public and be a foundation for the committee to lean on in considering charter changes and making decisions.

### **Option 1: Statement Of Purpose**

In order to honor and value all people and **to create a future that no longer rests on the subjugation and devaluing of indigenous, black and other people of color**, The Charter Review Committee will approach this task with an open mind, seek public input whenever possible, and strive to reach consensus as opposed to majority rule. **With the acknowledgement that Cambridge was built on land stolen from Indigenous people and financed by brutal slavery, we strive to improve the existing Charter by addressing the inequities built into the power structures and legislature which govern this city. We will be conscious of and seek to remedy historical injustices and affirmatively advance everyone's capacity to thrive and participate in government and be attentive to the fullest possible range of civic concerns. We seek the input of community organizations, small business owners, institutions, and all members of our community, particularly people who have been historically marginalized to understand opportunities for equitable change in local governance.**

We will treat everyone in the committee as equally entitled to make decisions, and everyone in our community as deserving of equal dignity, respect, tolerance, and humility. To ensure transparency of the committee's work, we will strive to make communications and deliberations available to the public. In summary, we have decided on the following values to guide our work in proposing a new Charter for the city of Cambridge: Community, Democracy, Civility and Social justice.

### **Option 2: Committee Values Statement**

This Cambridge Charter Review Committee strives to work effectively and efficiently to produce a recommendation that empowers equitable, just, and democratic opportunities for all individuals of Cambridge.

### **Community**

- We will work to engage a cross section of the Cambridge community, especially focusing on historically marginalized groups, to incorporate interests of all Cantabrigians in short, immediate, and future civic goals.
- We will strive to honor and value all people and aspire to create a future that recognizes and responds to historical subjugation.

## Democracy

- We will seek input from local organizations, small business owners, and municipal leaders across the community to understand opportunities for equitable change in local governance.
- We will strive to make the committee's work, communications, and deliberations transparent and available to the public.

## Civility

- We will hold all committee members with equal decision making capabilities and acknowledge the dignity and humanity of the entire community.
- We will engage each other and the public with respect, tolerance, humility, and open-mindedness throughout the process.

## Social Justice

- **We will strive to improve Cambridge's Charter by addressing the inequities built into the government foundation and power structures, acknowledging that Cambridge was built on land stolen from Indigenous people and built and financed by brutal slavery.**
  - We will be conscious of and seek to remedy historical injustices and affirmatively advance everyone's capacity to thrive and participate in government.
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Dear Members of the Charter Review Committee,

Regrettably, I cannot attend today's meeting, due to Covid.

I take the liberty of sending along some comments regarding today's agenda items in lieu of presenting them "in person."

**1.** I am generally fine with the "**ground rules**" and "**decision-making**" and "**community engagement**" statements and thank all who participated in the drafting and otherwise for all their hard work.

### **2. Statement of Purpose**

Respectfully, I strongly object to the current statement both as to wording and to content.

a. Our purpose as a committee, as I understand it, is to review and make suggestions as to possible changes in the present City Charter. It is not, primarily (and as current statement suggests) to rectify past racial and other injustices, any more than it is to establish world peace. However worthy such goals, it is not the main task we have been assigned and have delegated authority to address.

b. Opening statement is also inconsistent with being open to "the fullest range of civic concerns," having indeed narrowed such concerns to a single issue (before we have had a chance to canvas such concerns on even a preliminary basis).

c. Opening statement is likely to alienate many in the wider community whom we claim to wish to engage.

d. Statement as worded takes for granted we already know and agree about what needs fixing and how to fix it; rather than presenting them as open questions for our due consideration over the coming months.

### **3. Values Statement**

a. Statement as written is contradictory: we cannot honestly solicit the views of all members of the community and at the same time put our thumb on the scales in the interests (as we see it) of one special group or groups. Why should others participate if seems to them (as it might, however wrongly, given the present wording) that the "fix is in"?

b. Public outreach and consensus are great, and everyone has an equal right to his/her/their opinion, but not all opinions can be equally true (unless, of course, they are all equally "untrue"). Our job as I understand it is not just to let everyone have a say, but to accurately assess how well the current Charter is or isn't working to advance the city's legitimate goals and interests.

c. Too much stress on what should almost go without saying (namely that we treat one another respectfully and in hopes of learning something from the other and collectively). To belabor the point is to suggest the opposite.

d. Social justice statement is problematic for the reasons already discussed above: namely, that it "puts the cart before the horse." Either we already know what's (mainly) wrong and what to do about it (in which case we should write our report now and disband early) or it is (or will be read as) mere "virtue-signaling."

With apologies again for my absence, and regrets that I cannot participate more directly in your important deliberations.

Gratefully and respectfully yours,

Susan (Shell)

Charter Review Committee Member

11/21/22