



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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### COMMISSIONERS

Ethridge A. King, Jr.  
Larry W. Ward  
Charles J. Marquardt  
Victoria A. Harris

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tanya L. Ford

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Lesley Waxman

## BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS MEETING Minutes of September 27, 2023

The Chair, Commissioner Harris, called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM on September 27, 2023. Present were the Chair, Commissioner Victoria Harris, Commissioner Larry Ward, Commissioner Charles Marquardt, Commissioner Ethridge King, Executive Director Tanya Ford, and Assistant Director Lesley Waxman.

### Roll Call:

Commissioner Victoria Harris	Present
Commissioner Larry Ward	Present
Commissioner Charles Marquardt	Present
Commissioner Ethridge King	Present

### I. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Gary Mello gave a public comment  
Mr. John Hawkinson gave a public comment

**Motion:** To close Public Comment.

Moved: Commissioner Harris  
Seconded: Commissioner Marquardt  
Passed: 4—0

### II: MINUTES

**Motion:** To approve the Minutes of September 13, 2023.

Moved: Commissioner Harris  
Seconded: Commissioner Marquardt  
Passed: 4—0

### III: REPORTS

#### 1. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director reported that updates were made to the Voter Guide, the Ballot Drop-box Flier, and the Early Voting Flier. The Voter Guides will be mailed out next week—and the Ballot Drop-box and Early Voting Fliers will be distributed in public places, such as, the libraries, City Hall, Traffic and Parking, and Voter Registration sessions for residents to take.

The Executive Director reported that she submitted the recommendation for police staffing for Election Day, most likely being added to the October 2, 2023 City Council meeting agenda.

Commissioner Marquardt asked Executive Director Ford if the time had passed for the City Council to add a ballot question? Ms. Ford answered the deadline is next week on October 5, 2023.

## **2. Assistant Director's Report**

Assistant Director Waxman reported that the office received 9,963 early voting and 92 absentees' applications to-date for a total of 10,055.

## **3. Commissioners Reports**

Commissioner Marquardt reported that 48 River Street is not a valid residential address.

Commissioner Marquardt reported that National Voter Registration Week was last Tuesday (September 19)—he and Commissioner Ward participated in the Bayer Company voter registration drive that resulted in two people registering.

Commissioner King reported that 7 Hawthorn Street #2 is not a valid address.

Commissioner Ward reported that he went back to re-examine 219 Elm Street—there's a 217 and a 221 Elm Street, but no 219, therefore, it remains an invalid address.

Commissioner Harris reported that she presented at the September 14, Democratic City Committee meeting and her presentation was very short. In Commissioner Harris' presentation she gave an update to remind people of the November 7 Election, and gave out a few dates and deadlines about early voting. She also advised them to request their EV ballots as early as possible, and reminded them about the ballot drop-boxes, and to check their Voter Guides.

Commissioner Harris reported that she attended MIT Data Election Science working group meeting on September 21. The presentation focused on election legislation, specifically laws that promote automatic voter registration and the effect on turnout (more about this under New Business).

Commissioner Harris reported that she and Commissioner Ward attended CRLS' club week. They had a table setup to recruit student Poll Workers and they have signed up 30 students thus far.

Commissioner Harris attended the Charter Review Committee meeting via Zoom, the election agenda item was tabled for the October 10 meeting (more about this under New Business).

## **IV. ACTION AGENDA**

### **Old Business**

#### **Municipal Election**

Commissioner Harris mentioned she is leaning towards hiring an additional inspector for a total of four for people to work early voting at the Water Department.

Commissioner Marquardt chimed in to support Commissioner Harris' concern that the Water Department is the busiest EV site.

Commissioner Harris asked the Executive Director if she needs temporary staff for the Office.

Executive Director Ford shared with the Board that they have three temporary employees plus a full-time permanent person who was recently hired.

Commissioner Harris asked if the reason not to pre-process ballots had to do with a lack of staff.

Executive Director Ford stated that the decision not to pre-process was not due to a lack of staff but rather, due to the timing of the ballots being received.

Assistant Director Waxman shared with the Board that the 2021 Municipal ballot data showed the date vote-by-mail ballots were received did not give them enough time to pre-process the ballots. Her analysis showed that the amount of time and resources (EC office staff, 24-hour police security, space, DPW transporting ballots, etc.) far outweighed the benefit of preprocessing less than 20% of the EV and AV ballots.

Commissioner Marquardt asked/commented that the 150-foot rule now applies to Early Voting sites as well.

Assistant Director Waxman reported that she sent all the PowerPoint slides to Scytl with a go-live date of Friday, October 19.

Assistant Director Waxman requested that the updated Poll Worker lists be sent to her by Wednesday, October 11. She asked the Commissioners to contact their Poll Workers to confirm they plan to work so more workers can be preloaded in to Scytl when it goes live.

Commissioner Marquardt thanked the Assistant Director for getting the PowerPoint slides ready for Scytl.

Executive Director Ford requested that the Poll Worker List be sent directly to her.

Commissioner King asked about the ballot-box training, if we can have the scanner operational.

Executive Director Ford confirmed that there will be a ballot-box at 51 Inman for the trainings.

Assistant Director Waxman stated the plan for ballot-box training was only to focus on installing the ballot scanner.

Commissioner Harris asked if Assistant Director Waxman can take pictures during the testing of the ballots (test deck) with the various error messages to use for training.

There was a lengthy discussion about training on the ballot-box, touching on topics of having LHS in person for equipment training going forward. Ms. Waxman shared that October 24 happens to be the day that Mike from LHS will be onsite at 51 Inman Street for the test deck—and perhaps he can be available to answer any ballot-box questions. Assistant Director Waxman will get back to the Board in regards to Mike's availability on October 24.

Assistant Director Waxman reserved the second-floor conference room at 51 Inman for October 24 and October 26 for ballot-box and in-person Inspector training.

The Commissioner had a discussion and agreed that ballot-box and Inspector training will take place on Tuesday, October 24, and Saturday, October 28. Both the dates and times will be firmed up at our next meeting on October 4.

### **New Business**

Commissioner Harris gave an update from the Charter Review Committee meeting. The committee is considering the following:

- Allowing 16-year-olds to vote in Municipal elections
- Allowing non-citizens to vote in Municipal elections
- Changing the Municipal election from odd years to even years to coincide with Statewide and Presidential elections
- Switching to the fractional transfer method for Proportional Representation (PR) for Municipal elections

Commissioner Harris further discussed syncing the Municipal election with Statewide even year elections. When the Board attended the Charter Review Committee meeting a few months back we discussed some of the challenges even year Municipal elections present. At the MIT working group session, Ms. Harris met Assistant Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Justin Benedictis-Kessner who has done a lot of research on the subject matter of syncing Municipal and Statewide elections. Ms. Harris stated he would be happy to speak with the Board to share his perspective. Commissioner Harris also asked if the Board wants to attend the October 10 Charter Review Committee meeting in the event they have election related questions.

Commissioner Marquardt stated that he thinks it would be a good idea to have the Kennedy School professor attend a Commission meeting.

Commissioner Harris will contact Professor Benedictis-Kessner to invite him to present at our meeting.

Commissioner King reported that Kathleen Born from the Charter Review Committee reached out to he and Commissioner Ward, to let them know that she may call on the Board as subject matter experts in regards to Cambridge's Municipal election.

Commissioner King asked John Hawkinson from the Public if he had a sense if the Charter Review Committee might request another extension beyond December 31, 2023.

**Commissioner Harris made a Motion to re-open Public Comment.**

Moved: Commissioner Harris  
Seconded: Commissioner Marquardt  
Passed 4—0

The Board voted to re-open public comment.

Mr. Hawkinson commented that he believes the Charter Review Committee will not request an extension.

Commissioner Harris requested the Board move from bi-weekly to weekly meetings.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at 5:30 PM.

**Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:41 PM.**

Moved: Commissioner Harris  
Seconded: Commissioner Ward  
Passed: 4—0

A True Record

Attested by: Ethridge King  
Ethridge A. King, Secretary