

Citizens Committee on Civic Unity

Meeting Notes

Committee Meeting

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

11/9/2021, 5:30-7:00 pm

Attending: Kelly Hassett; Namrata Sengupta; Talia Weisberg; Abhishek Raman; Connor Clancy; Eva Martin Blythe; Veronica Ortega; Laura Mosman Smith;
Staff: Taha Jennings, Brian Corr

Started meeting at 5:37

General Business

- **Committee Housekeeping**
 - Welcoming new members: Taha and Kelly welcomed people to the meeting and new members to the committee
 - Introductions: Members shared introductions
 - Who you are
 - How you feel connected to Cambridge
 - Why you joined this committee
 - One thing that you hope to have done, learned, or supported over the next year by being on this committee
 - Members and staff shared introductions
- **Overview of the Committee**
 - Taha framed committee status, timeframe, and new membership as an opportunity to learn from the past efforts and also to revisit goals, action plans, activities, as well as how to increase engagement. Continuing members were asked to share one highlight and one challenge that the committee has faced:
 - General committee update - (primarily for new members)- what we've done; review of past successes and challenges; where we are now
 - Laura shared that the Implicit Bias event with Dr. Banaji was a success;
 - Eva noted the CRLS events with Billie Jean Young and her one-person play about Fannie Lou Hamer and the challenges of her passing before those additional events. They had to rethink it and bring in others to do an

educational and thought-provoking event.

- A challenge noted was the need to quickly mobilize a community dialogue at the YWCA library about an unfortunate encounter between a young black man and an off-duty Cambridge Police officer in Porter Square. That event demonstrated that people who don't generally come to public meetings were willing to come out and talk to each other about important issues. It was noted that the Committee may want to look at future opportunities to engage diverse community members in dialogue, and also go out to different parts of the city.
- The Committee might also want to consider sharing any videos of the event with Janet Moses, Eva, and Billie Jean Young.
- Kelly shared that she sees a challenge about deciding what direction the Committee should go – and noted that we could really do anything with all these new members.
- Brian and Taha noted the “Cambridge: who we are and how we got here” event with Cliff Cook (on demographics) and Charlie Sullivan (Historical Commission) and it brought a real diversity of residents along with City officials.
- Also stated that the Blindspot event was great, and the City had been trying to get Dr. Banaji for years, and it led to her doing training for CPD in implicit bias.
- An example of a challenge is that after the event on the Porter Sq. incident, the committee was interested in setting up sort of an infrastructure for rapid response, but it's challenging with only monthly meetings
- Moving forward - Goals, objectives, targeted groups; actions, desired outcomes; review mission statement; think about/discuss strategy moving forward
 - Taha noted that we have money to do events, and we also have money to bring in a consultant to help the committee with a visioning process with the new infusion of people and come up with a direction
- What other things is the group interested in doing or discussing at meetings? -(ex. collaboration, review understand Department work; events; internal guest speakers; etc.)
 - Namrata asked if we offer honoraria for speakers on DEI; also wondered if we are able to engage with younger people and use social media and is there an opportunity for this committee to work with the City's social media staff? Brian and Taha explained the situation on honoraria and the City's social media protocols
 - Connor is happy to help with strategic planning and he has done a lot of that and is trained in design thinking, and there are a range of consultants, so he

could help in the planning and selection of a consultant.

- Connor also asked how the committee has measured success of events and activities. Taha noted that there isn't a formal evaluation, but events like the Implicit Bias event brought out people who don't normally come out, and how engaged they are.
- Talia asked what the other commissions are that overlap with us and do we work together.
- Abhishek noted that he also has experience with strategic planning and would be happy to work with Connor. He also asked if there are ways to use other way to build civic unity, such as how Chicago uses public art to build community; 2026 will be the 250th anniversary on the US and there is going to be both national events through America 250 and they want local events to happen. [noted that 1976 was the same time as the Iran Hostage Crisis].
- Eva noted that members of the committee have connections and are involved with and can leverage those to build community, and hers were with the Women's Commission and the LGBTQ+ Commission. Also, that when we work with those and co-sponsor events we bring those people and their constituencies to the table and events. Also, thinking about media, we have a great resource in CCTV, which has been very supportive of the committee.
- Veronica asked if at past events or at the beginning of the committee, have we polled or asked attendees what they might be interested in, what is their connection, what are your needs or concerns that you might want us to address.
- Review logistics (date/time, format, communication, etc.)
 - Continue to meet on the first Tuesday from 5:30 to 7:00 pm
 - Send an email to Taha if there is a City department that people would like to have present to us
 - Eva thought it would be great to have Police Commissioner Elow come to meet with us and hear from her and discuss how we could work together
 - Brian offered to work with Connor and Abhishek on the strategic planning effort
 - Next Meeting(s) on: 12/7, 1/4/2022
- **Upcoming & Developing Projects (6:30-6:50)**
 - Baldwin School Plaque
 - We received an email update from Betsy Bard
 - Other Ideas/Brainstorming
 - Kelly asked everyone to brainstorm ideas for the future