



Cambridge Peace Commission

A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Minutes of the Peace Commission Meeting • February 15, 2023

Commission Members Present: Co-Chair Larry Kim, Kaleb Abebe, Annie Brown, Yasmine Hung, Sarah DeMott, Kaza Fraley, David Seeman, Bonnie Talbert

City Staff Present: Executive Director Brian Corr

Call to Order: Co-Chair Kim called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion from Commission Member Talbert, seconded by Commission Member Hung, the minutes of the November 16, 2022 meeting were approved unanimously.

Checking In

- People shared brief personal and professional updates from the last month.

Executive Director's Report

- Exec. Dir. Corr reported that he has been involved in the City's response to the tragic fatal officer-involved shooting of Arif Sayed Faisal on January 4, 2023. He noted that there were public updates provided on February 14 by both the City Manager and the Police Commissioner about the fatal shooting, and City staff and officials cannot discuss any other details because it is under investigation by the Middlesex District Attorney's Office.
 - In January, Exec. Dir. Corr moderated a difficult four-hour community meeting after the fatal shooting and the tension and anguish about the death of the young man and what led up to it. He also spoke after the weekly congregational prayer at the Islamic Society of Boston (the Cambridge mosque on Prospect St.) and spoke briefly with the young man's father two days after the shooting.
 - In response to a question from Co-Chair Kim about what support the family has received, Ex. Dir. Corr explained that they have received support from the Islamic Society of Boston, Riverside Trauma Center, and a GoFundMe campaign.
- Exec. Dir. Corr. noted that he was wrapping up the final details from the Martin Luther King Day Commemoration, and encouraged people to share their experiences and thoughts about the event.
 - Commission Member Hung notes that it was nice to be in community with others from the Peace Commission and the community as one of the first post-covid events where we could sit together and eat together. The event ran smoothly.
 - Commission Member Seeman reiterated how great it was to be in person and liked the program, particularly the emphasis on the "triplets."
 - Commission Member DeMott appreciated the call to action and noted that it was good to see Exec. Dir Corr's professional skills at work.
 - Several commission members reiterated that it ran very smoothly.

- Commission Member Fraley noted that it felt great to be feeding the people who attended the community lunch following the program.
- Ex. Dir. Corr noted that he was very appreciative of hearing that everyone had a good experience and that the speaker, Gail Packer, was honored and counts it as a highlight of her career.
- Commission Member Brown stated that she shared those sentiments and was thankful to participate as well.

Planning for Race: the Power of an Illusion in 2023

- Co-Chair Kim reminded people that the screening of *RACE: The Power of an Illusion* is tentatively scheduled for March 30th from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and asked for people to weigh in about how the Commission members feel about moving forward.
- Many commission members stated strong support for moving ahead with the event. Some cautions were raised about the impact of current events on this planned event, which led to a discussion of specifics including:
 - Publicity and outreach: How can we get the word out?
 - Framing the issues: Perhaps the framing is from the lens of equity, inclusion, and belonging from Commission members with pastoral experience and training.
 - How can we make it more possible for people to engage? Could we have childcare options? If not for this event, for future events?
- Previous plans and the facilitation slideshow were reviewed, and all agreed that Commission Member Fraley and Co-Chair Kim will open the event and Ex. Dir. Corr will introduce the film. Small group facilitators would be decided at the next Commission meeting.

Discussion about Holding a Commemoration of the Holocaust in 2023

- Exec. Dir. Corr. provided information and context about this event for the Commission:
 - Former Mayor Alice Wolf, who just died in January, was a founder of the commemoration and participated in calling the names/sharing names of family members who perished in the Holocaust. It will be important to recognize her at the next commemoration.
 - It has taken place at Temple Beth Shalom in Cambridge for more than 30 years, except for the first two years of the COVID pandemic and via Zoom in 2022.
 - Recalling all who perished during the Holocaust, the program features an evening of music, candle lighting, and remembrance. It recognizes all of the communities that were targeted during the Holocaust. It is a combination of acknowledging what happened and bearing witness, as well as honoring resilience and survival – not just loss.
 - Every year save one, a Survivor of the Holocaust has spoken and shared their personal story as part of the event, and many of the attendees are survivors or are the children and grandchildren of survivors. The commitment has been that the Commemoration will continue to feature a Survivor as the speaker as long as possible, though an important challenge is that there is a dwindling number of Survivors who are able and willing to speak and share their stories.
 - One year, a child of Survivors (Norman Berman) spoke and based it on extensive work he had done over years to interview his parents and understand their stories.
 - The Commemoration has the feeling of a memorial service with readings, poems, music (often including A Besere Velt from Workman's Circle, the Cambridge Community Chorus, the CRLS Vocal Ensemble), and includes many participants, somewhat like the Martin Luther King Day commemoration.

- One possible speaker is Karen Frostig, a local professor and artist who recently spoke before the UN General Assembly about her parents who were survivors and her grandparents who perished in the Holocaust.
- Exec. Dir. Corr reported that he is looking as a Wednesday or Thursday during the last week of April or first week of May, as is usual, and the exact date will depend on the availability of the synagogue, speakers, etc. He welcomed ideas for potential speakers.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM on a motion from Commission Member Abebe, seconded by Commission Member Hung, approved by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the Peace Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 via Zoom.