



Cambridge Peace Commission

A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Minutes of the Peace Commission Meeting • May 17, 2023

Commission Members Present: Co-Chair Larry Kim, Co-Chair Elka Kuhlman, Kaleb Abebe, Annie Brown, Yasmine Hung, Bonnie Talbert

City Staff Present: Executive Director Brian Corr, Police Liaison Fred Cabral

Call to Order: Co-Chair Kuhlman called the meeting to order at 6:19 p.m.

Checking In

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

Executive Director's Report

- Exec. Dir. Corr provided a report on the 2023 Annual Commemoration of the Holocaust.
 - He reported that all of the pieces came together well, and the commemoration was held on May 3, and it featured remarks by Holocaust survivor Magda Bader. He noted that he was very gratified that he was able to find a survivor who was willing and able to speak about their experience, and that it was through multiple connections that she was brought to his attention, and he was able to secure her as a speaker.
 - There were people who both appreciated the remarks of Rabbi Liza Stern discussing the importance of young people attending commemorations like this one despite the desire to shield them for the horrors of the world; there were also people who were troubled by her remarks.
 - In response to a question about whether the commemoration had been recorded, he explained that in the past, volunteers from Cambridge Community Television had recorded and broadcast the event, but that there had been years where the recording was disruptive and took away from the event.
- Exec. Dir. Corr. reported that he is working with the Citizens' Committee on Civic Unity on Loving Day 2023.
 - Loving Day commemorates the anniversary of the 1967 Supreme Court decision, *Loving v. Virginia* which legalized interracial marriage across the U.S.
 - Citizens' Committee on Civic Unity organizes the event which occurs on the second Saturday in June. In the past the event has included couples renewing their vows.
 - This year it will take place at the park in front of the main library from 2 to 4 PM. There will be remarks at 2 PM and activities (which include art-making, and a DJ/music) beginning at 2:45.
 - He noted that perhaps this is an opportunity for cross pollination between our two organizations.

Planning for Meet Your Neighbor Day 2023

Because the Peace Commission does not meet in July and August, Co-Chair Kuhlman suggested that we also place planning for the event on the June meeting agenda.

- Exec. Dir. Corr shared that the intention of the event is that people will do things on their own and that the Peace Commission does not sponsor specific events or necessarily need to organize events.

- Because the third Sunday in September falls during Rosh Hashanah in 2023, Meet Your Neighbor Day will be held on the second Sunday, September 10, which Police Liaison Cabral noted is also the date of the Cambridge Caribbean Festival.
- Commission members discussed potential ideas for Meet Your Neighbor Day
 - Block Parties and Play Streets:
 - Commission Member Abebe shared that barriers have been reduced for gathering signatures for a block party so that you only need 25% of residents, and that the City may give up to \$200 to support expenses.
 - Co-Chair Kuhlman suggested that we form a partnership with the Community Development Department that offers “Play Streets” and Exec. Dir. Corr will follow up to check on their capacity for Meet Your Neighbor Day.
 - Ideas for coffee, ice cream, and food from local restaurants such as Sofra were discussed.
 - Exec. Dir. Corr will bring to the next meeting the list of suggested activities that he has sent out in the past which include everything from yard sales to music.
- Commission members discussed the need for publicity for Meet Your Neighbor Day and suggested a variety of ideas for publicizing the event and plan to discuss publicity further at the next meeting. Suggestion included:
 - Posting posters in neighborhoods
 - Creating a social media, digital poster
 - Emailing to popular listservs
 - Providing a notice in the Chronicle
 - Publicizing through partners
- Exec. Dir. Corr asked people to share stories of their experiences and he has three from last year, including one from Anne Hager in Strawberry Hill. He suggested that it is not too late for other members to also share stories.

Feedback on the Cycling Safety Ordinance

Commission Member Abebe offered context for the Cycling Safety Ordinance Implementation Advisory Committee on which he serves as a member of the Peace Commission, explaining that the Committee has the goal of providing community feedback on the 2019 Cycling Safety Ordinance.

- The Committee is attempting to improve community engagement.
- In the past, postcards and digital signage have been used to notify communities about planned bike lanes.
- The law prescribes 25 miles of bike lanes, and has resulted in two lawsuits and strong opinions. It has been characterized as “well intended” and “poorly executed.”

Commission members provided feedback on the implementation of the law. There was lengthy discussion on the bike lanes on Garden Street and in Inman Square.

- Numerous suggestions revolved around better communication of (1) the big picture of the plan as well as (2) information ahead of changes for specific communities that will be impacted, recognizing that the area of impact has often been wider than what city officials have anticipated.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM on a motion from Commission Member Abebe, seconded by Commission Member Brown, approved by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the Peace Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 51 Inman St., 2nd Floor.