



# Cambridge Peace Commission

*A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts*

## Minutes of the Peace Commission Meeting • October 18, 2023

**Commission Members Present:** Co-Chair Elka Kuhlman, Annie Brown, Sarah DeMott, Yasmine Hung, David Seeman, Bonnie Talbert

**City Staff Present:** Executive Director Brian Corr

**Call to Order:** Co-Chair Kuhlman called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** On a motion from Commission Member Hung, seconded by Commission Member Seeman, the minutes of the September 20, 2023 meeting were approved unanimously.

### Checking In

- People shared brief personal and professional updates from the last month.
- Member Spotlight: Commission Member DeMott-explained that as part of her work at the Harvard Libraries, she is the liaison for the Harvard Legacy of Slavery Project– looking at the ways that slavery has impacted Harvard, Cambridge, and Boston. Some of those impacts include that some of the city’s brick sidewalks originated with Harvard paving them as a gesture of support to the community, and some of the slaveholders were paid to send the individuals that they enslaved to do the paving work. There were enslaved people who worked for Harvard; there were people affiliated with Harvard who invested in plantations in the Caribbean. She noted that all four of Cambridge’s early churches have relationships with enslaved people: baptisms, people buried, parishioners who enslaved people. The Legacy of Slavery Project is working on how Harvard will roll out reparations plans, and there may be some grants made.

### Executive Director’s Report

- Exec. Dir. Corr reported briefly that he would be attending a program organized by the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association as part of a delegation of young women active in government in Armenia. He noted that there is a large refugee crisis as part of recent events in a thirty-year conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan which recently escalated.

### Next Steps for “RACE: The Power of an Illusion”

There was agreement that a film screening and discussion of *RACE: The Power of an Illusion (Episode II: "The Story We Tell")* in March 2024, followed by a discussion and brainstorming:

- Episode II is broadly about the interwoven history of racialization, colonization and immigration.
- Commission members discussed what they would like to present to the community beyond the video, including having ways to remind people about the positive aspects of immigration.
- They brainstormed ways to increase awareness and turnout at the event, including the idea of partnering with other City of Cambridge agencies or community groups.

### **Peace Commission Efforts in 2024: A Model of Peace**

Commission members discussed the current challenges in having peace at the interpersonal, local, national and global levels, and then focused on possible ways for dialogue and conversation that allows people to disagree peaceably and to listen to and hear each other.

- Commission members shared relevant stories from their own experiences .
- Various models were discussed, including Braver Angels, Essential Partners (formerly Public Conversations Project), and the World Café model. There was an emphasis on creating community before opening up discussions as an important aspect of those kinds of efforts.
- Thinking about positive ways to look at this, Commission Member Hung shared the idea of HOPEs (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) rather than only thinking about trauma and ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) in terms of how people can address challenges.

### **Next Steps**

- Commission members will bring a resource related to how to be Models of Peace to the next meeting.
- At the next meeting Commission members will pick a date for a holiday gathering.
- Commission Member Hung agreed to speak during the Member Spotlight during the checking-in portion of the next meeting.

### **Adjournment**

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

*The next meeting of the Peace Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 51 Inman St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.*