



Cambridge Peace Commission

A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Minutes of the Peace Commission Meeting • September 20, 2023

Commission Members Present: Co-Chair Larry Kim, Co-Chair Elka Kuhlman, Kaleb Abebe, Kazimiera Fraley, 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 6:30 p.m.

Approval of May 17, 2023 Minutes

- The Commission unanimously approved the minutes on a motion from Commission Member Abebe, seconded by Commission Member Hung.

Checking In

- People shared brief personal and professional updates from the last month and addressed the question: "What is Coming Up for You around Peace?"

Executive Director's Report

- Exec. Dir. Corr reported that Loving Day 2023, which took place on June 11, commemorated the 56th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision that interracial marriages could not be banned by any states. The event was successful and included greetings and welcome, cupcakes, and a live DJ and special "make-and-take" craft activities for all by At Peace Arts. It was organized by the members of the Citizens Committee on Civic Unity, which he provides staff support for, and noted this is the first time he was able to attend.
- Exec. Dir. Corr and Commission members reviewed the twenty different 2023 Meet Your Neighbor Day events, which took place between September 9 and 17.
 - Exec. Dir. Corr reported that he was able to attend all 20 events, and that there was a higher percentage of block parties because of the efforts of various City departments, including Community Development and Traffic, Parking & Transportation to support them by reducing requirements, providing free games, and offering up to \$200 grants for them.
 - Commission Member Abebe shared about attending a block party he discovered while cycling on Harvard St. in the Port, and which had a DJ and food.
 - Commission members Hung, Seeman, and Co-Chair Kuhlman described the neighborhood party they organized in Raymond Park, and that it worked really well in spite of the rain on Sept. 9.
 - To plan, they met and brainstormed; Commission Member Talbert applied for a \$200 block party grant which they received; they created a Google Doc for collaboration; they made flyers and posted in the neighborhood; and created a 3-panel posterboard to collect ideas at the event.
 - They noted that many people who attended were relatively new to Cambridge.
 - Commission Member Talbert noted a lot of families with children left the playground at noon – probably for lunch -- so perhaps planning it for a different time might be a consideration.

- Co-Chair Kim noted that in past years the Central Square Church had supported the efforts of community members who spend time in front of the church or nearby at Carl Barron Plaza (a number of whom may be unhoused or facing other challenges) so they could plan a gathering with food and beverages that they thought would be good, and then were involved in the event itself.

Thinking about Peace Commission Efforts in 2024

Due to the press of time, the Commission postponed brainstorming dates and next steps for the next episode of “RACE: The Power of an Illusion” to the next meeting.

- Commission members had a long brainstorming discussion about creating space for dialogues on contentious issues, and the Braver Angels and Essential Partners (formerly the Public Conversations Project) came up as examples and organizations that provide training and structure for those. In particular, Braver Angels sponsors sessions that together bring people with diverse ideas with protocols on how to discuss divisive or difficult issues.
- There was then a wide-ranging discussion about things in Cambridge where people have strong and divergent opinions. and which are challenging and potentially divisive a way to model how to have divisive conversations.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM on a motion from Commission Member Fraley, seconded by Commission Member Talbert, approved by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the Peace Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 51 Inman St., 2nd Floor. (Please note that this is not the usual meeting date.)