



CIVIC UNITY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, February 2, 2023

5:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Civic Unity Committee will hold a public meeting to discuss the October 3, 2022 policy order pertaining to the Indigenous People in our community.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Carlone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5:01 PM
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Civic Unity Committee was held on Thursday, February 2, 2023. The meeting was Called to Order at 5:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Simmons. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Simmons – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Carlone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Toner – Absent*

Councillor Zondervan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

*Councillor Toner was marked present and remote at 5:12p.m.

Councillor Simmons gave her opening remarks (Attachment A) and noted that the call of the meeting was to discuss the October 3, 2022 Policy Order (Attachment B) pertaining to the Indigenous People in our community. She noted that Charles Sullivan, Executive Director for the Cambridge Historical Commission, was joined remotely and shared that Councillor McGovern and Mayor Siddiqui were also present.

Councillor Simmons began the meeting by introducing panelists who were joined remotely, which included, David Shane Lowry, visiting Senior Fellow at Brandeis University, Sage Carbone, Cambridge resident and member of the North American Indian Tribes of Rhode Island, Elizabeth Solomon, former Cambridge resident and Elder of the Massachusetts Tribe, and Robin Harris, former member of the Cambridge School Department and Cambridge School Committee, who has participated in a number of Tribes. After introductions, Councillor Simmons, panelists, and Council members went into discussion about the first Ordered of the Policy Order, which

reads as follows: That the City Council formally go on record in acknowledging that the City of Cambridge occupies land that remains/is still home of the Massachusetts Tribe, a vibrant and thriving community of people who are currently displaced from their position as sovereign owners of this land.

Elizabeth Solomon shared that there many things to think about, including the traditional holders of the land who are still here and about the current residents of Cambridge who are Indigenous and Native. Sage Carbone echoed comments made by Elizabeth when it comes to holders of the land, noting it's not just the land, it's the water and the air, and the ancestors that are buried. David Shane Lowry offered comments on how colonial nature has worked against the men, women, and children of Native people, noting that it's more than just land, but the loss of abilities.

Councillor Zondervan shared how the City created a micro forest in Danhey park and worked with native people to pick species that were planted. The City then made an arrangement that after three years, those who participated in the creation of the forest could come back and harvest some of the products to use for food or other practices. He noted that there should be more relationships with Cambridge residents, Native Americans, and nature. He stressed the importance of having more than just this conversation, but a process to help get there.

Councillor McGovern noted that he appreciated the conversation and what the panel has talked about. He noted that making an acknowledgment is one thing, but doing the actual work is another. He asked for there to be more information on the City website to include the history of the people who were here before European people and spoke in favor of following through with the Policy Order.

Councillor Simmons commented that what she is hearing more from panelists and Council members is how can the City put together information and education to be more available. She shared that when looking at some of the materials the City already has available online, it is not as fleshed out when it comes to Indigenous/Native people. She stressed the importance of going forward with how the City can educate people to think in a different way, and the possibility of appointing an advisory group or working group to build on the current material.

Sage Carbone offered comments and suggestions on reclaiming the underused pieces of land around the city and working with the Historical Commission to revise some of the signage and history that is being publicized on different city pages.

Elizabeth Solomon shared that her and other panelists could be available to help guide but said she feels that institutions and the City should be taking the lead.

Councillor Zondervan had a clarifying question regarding a historical marker in Harvard Square, Charlie Sullivan shared that the Historical Commission is working with Councillor Zondervan and Mayor Siddiqui to rewrite two history markers in Winthrop Square to add information about the founding and development of the city. He noted that the marker was originally written forty years ago and did not reflect the understanding of Indigenous People and African Americans in Cambridge, and that the City believes it is important to have it more accurate and more relevant. He agreed with the idea of obtaining an advisory committee to think through what these projects mean. Councillor Zondervan noted that it could be helpful, while the city is doing this work, to put some indication on the website or on the physical marker that the City is in the process of rewriting so people know the City is reworking to incorporate the native history. Charlie Sullivan noted there is a note on the Winthrop Square marker sharing some of that information.

David Shane Lowry offered suggestions on how Cambridge can make a proclamation that the City is an era of representation that reminds everyone of Indigenous People and Native Americans.

Councillor Simmons read the next Ordered of the Policy Order, which reads as follows: That the City Council go on record acknowledging that while the modern day City of Cambridge cannot go back and undo the sins committed by our predecessors almost four centuries ago, we can and must incorporate a more nuanced, more truthful telling of our historical narrative to ensure that the stories of the Indigenous Peoples who originally occupied this land are not lost to history.

Councillor Simmons opened discussion to panelists and Council members.

David Shane Lowry noted that a conversation about the future, and going forward, is something that should be considered. Councillor Zondervan shared that he agreed, and he support David's statement.

Councillor Simmons commented that going forward the City can focus on broadening the conversations on reparations to include Indigenous People and Native Americans. Elizabeth Solomon shared that there is internal work the City of Cambridge needs to do and it should include land acknowledgement.

Robin Harris offered suggestions on how the history of Indigenous People and Native Americans can be shared through children's literature. Councillor Simmons agreed that literature is a smart way to educate school aged children. David Shane Lowry offered suggestions on ways Cambridge could work with public tv and going forward work to create a public education and media to share Native stories.

Councillor Simmons read the Ordered of the Policy Order, which reads as follows: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to review the current cultural sensitivity training for all City employees and ensure that it explicitly includes and highlights the experiences of the Indigenous Peoples in all cultural sensitivity trainings going forward. Councillor Simmons opened discussion to panelists and Council members and noted that going forward it would be important to include Indigenous People and Native Americans in sensitivity training.

Sage Carbone noted that more equity on training would provide an easier path for ongoing projects. David Shane Lowry shared that it's important to begin to allow people, locally in the government, to see native people in a position of influence. He noted that Boston has approved an official liaison and commented that Cambridge needs a permanent Indigenous presence.

Elizabeth Solmon suggested looking beyond sensitivity and visibility. They shared more information on the Boston liaison, noting their position is to look at relationships and make recommendations going forward regarding their integration with the City and its relationship with Indigenous People.

Councillor Simmons read the final Ordered from the Policy Order, which reads as follows: That the City Manager be and herby is requested to convene an advisory group to determine ways in which he City can work to lift up the voices and experiences of the descendants of the Indigenous People who currently reside in our community, and in which the City can engage in purposeful relationship building with the Indigenous People of this area.

Elizabeth Solomon offered suggestions on an advisory committee noting that there should be representation from actual Native and Indigenous residents of the City and noted how higher education communities can come in to assist. David Shane Lowry shared that there should be a good relationship with people, and to look at both people who are young and older, he commented how the Native communities, both the youth and elders, should build and work together.

Sage Carbone stressed the importance of having engagement activities that could highlight positivity in order for these groups to further work with the City and move forward. She shared that trust needs to be built and a baseline where people feel their voices can be heard in their everyday lives. David Shane Lowry echoed some of the comments made and suggested that the City look at an official place for Native people to come together and have these conversations and for them to have a place of influence.

Councillor Zondervan noted that he supports the suggestion of creating a space for Native people in Cambridge. Councillor Simmons shared that she agreed.

Councillor Simmons reviewed topics that came up during discussion, and noted that the future plan of action will include land acknowledgment and engagement with the community, more training and conversations with the new Chief of Equity and Inclusion for the City of Cambridge, creating an advisory committee that would be intergenerational between young and elder residents, looking at more engagement with children through learning and literature, and a center for Native and Indigenous People to meet and come together.

Elizabeth Solomon thanked the Committee for specifically looking at these issues and thanked members for participating and inviting the panelists.

Robin Harris thanked Councillor Simmons for bringing these issues to the forefront and believes this committee is moving in the right direction to include Native people.

David Shane Lowry shared that they were happy and joyful speaking about this and looks forward to collaborating more.

Sage Carbone shared they were looking forward to future conversations and next steps.

Councillor Simmons thanked panelists for their time and talent to help the City move forward.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who made a motion to close public comment.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Carlone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – No

Yes – 3, No – 1, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Zondervan who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Carlone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent -1. Meeting adjourned.

Attachment A – Opening remarks from Councillor Simmons

Attachment B – Policy Order #2022 #179

Clerk’s Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record.

The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/435?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=c59551d981856afab87a2612ef06ae20

That the City Manager is requested to convene an advisory group to determine ways in which the City can work to lift up the voices and experiences of the descendants of the Indigenous People who currently reside in our community.

Attachment A

OPENING REMARKS FOR CIVIC UNITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023 at 5 pm

Zoom Link: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/97895847144>

Committee Members: Simmons, Carlone, Mallon, Toner, and Zondervan

Call of the Meeting: “The Civic Unity Committee will hold a public meeting to discuss the October 3, 2022 policy order pertaining to the Indigenous People in our community.”

I want to thank you all for joining us for this evening’s meeting of the Civic Unity Committee. On October 3, 2022, I sponsored a policy order that asked the City of Cambridge to fully reckon with the fact that, for all the many undeniably wonderful things that our city has achieved and evolved into over the past four centuries, we live on stolen land. Prior to the early 1600s, when the first English colonialists came to these shores and set up what would evolve into the City of Cambridge, there were already people living here, working here, and thriving here. Those people had been here for *thousands of years*, developing their own language, their own culture, their own traditions – their own society. And they did not choose to relinquish this land to the English colonialists; rather, the English colonialists TOOK this land right from under their feet, by coercion, by force, by trickery, and by murder.

Nobody in this room was alive when those events took place; but the majority of us are nonetheless benefitting from those centuries-old crimes, and from an occupation that continues to this very day. In the same way that our contemporary society is built upon foundations built by slave labor, it is imperative that we recognize one simple truth: we can never truly begin the process of healing if we don’t first name, acknowledge, and understand the root illness. Only by acknowledging that uncomfortable history, by incorporating it into our larger narrative, can we then begin to determine what actions might be taken to place us upon a path toward a more just, more equitable society going forward.

That policy order from last October contained a series of directives to the City Council and to the City Manager. My plan is to use tonight’s hearing to discuss those directives, to flesh out what is being asked for and to provide some further guidance as to how the City might best respond. To that end, I have enlisted the help of those who are much more knowledgeable in this field than I am, and the four experts that we have with us are: Prof. David Shane Lowry, Sage Carbone, Elizabeth Solomon, and a woman who is certainly no stranger to any of us, Robin Harris. In just a moment, I will ask each of our invited experts to introduce themselves and provide a bit more information about their work and perspectives.

It is my hope that tonight’s discussion will be productive and respectful, and that it will bring us one step closer to finding ways to truly uplift the voices of the descendants of the Indigenous People of what I *believe* was once known as “An-moke-cah-jen.”

After we walk through the Oct. 3 Policy Order, we will then move to Public Comment, followed by discussion among the Committee Members, and, after closing comments, adjournment.

With that, I would like to go around the table – both for those that are physically here and those that are joining us virtually – and ask Professor Lowry, Ms. Carbone, Ms. Solomon, and Ms. Harris to briefly introduce themselves before we then turn our attention to the policy order. Professor Lowry? Please introduce yourself to the Committee.



Attachment B

City of Cambridge

O-1
FIRST IN COUNCIL
October 3, 2022

COUNCILLOR SIMMONS
COUNCILLOR AZEEM
COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN
COUNCILLOR TONER

WHEREAS: It has long been taught as established history that the City of Newtowne, which would be renamed to the City of Cambridge in 1638, was colonized by the English in 1630, a process which in fact continues to this day; and

WHEREAS: While this is historically accurate, for centuries the story of those who already lived in and occupied this land has been all but whitewashed out of existence, subject to erasure, and the story of how this land was stolen from them has been conveniently swept aside, transforming their very existence into a mere historical footnote as the forerunner of when the “real” story of this region began; and

WHEREAS: Such historical whitewashing is disrespectful of those who originally called this land home, and a great distortion of the historical record of the lives, legacies, and achievements of the very real people who originally lived on this land; and

WHEREAS: Indeed, it is critical that, as we consider this matter from the vantage point of 2022, we acknowledge that this touches upon not just the theft of land, but the erasure of actual *people*; and

WHEREAS: In recent years, there has been growing momentum for municipalities like Cambridge to formally acknowledge the fact that our cities have been built upon stolen land, and while there is much to admire about the community that Cambridge has evolved into over the centuries, our story is incomplete without acknowledging those that our predecessors wrongfully displaced, and while we cannot undo the sins of the past, we can and must incorporate the stories of those who preceded the English colonialists into our larger historical narrative, and we must strive to do right by the descendants of those Indigenous Peoples; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Council formally go on record in acknowledging that the City of Cambridge occupies land that was once home of the Massachusetts Tribe, a vibrant and thriving community of people who were wrongfully displaced from their homeland, among other indigenous peoples who lived here; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Council go on record acknowledging that while the modern day City of Cambridge cannot go back and undo the sins committed by our predecessors almost four centuries ago, we can and must incorporate a more nuanced, more truthful telling of our historical narrative to ensure that the stories of the indigenous peoples who originally occupied this land are not lost to history; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to review the current cultural sensitivity training for all City employees and ensure that it explicitly includes and highlights the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in all cultural sensitivity trainings going forward; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to convene an advisory group to determine ways in which the City can work to lift up the voices and experiences of the descendants of the Indigenous People who currently reside in our community, and in which the City can engage in purposeful relationships/relationship building with the Indigenous People of this area; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner.

In City Council October 3, 2022.

Adopted by a yea and nay vote:-

Yeas 8; Nays 1; Absent 0.

Attest:- Diane P. LeBlanc, City Clerk

A true copy;

ATTEST:-



Diane P. LeBlanc,
City Clerk



CIVIC UNITY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ AGENDA ~

Thursday, February 2, 2023

5:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Civic Unity Committee will hold a public meeting to discuss the October 3, 2022 policy order pertaining to the Indigenous People in our community.

That the City Manager is requested to convene an advisory group to determine ways in which the City can work to lift up the voices and experiences of the descendants of the Indigenous People who currently reside in our community.



City of Cambridge

O-
FIRST IN COUNCIL
February 2, 2023

COUNCILLOR SIMMONS
COUNCILLOR AZEEM
COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN
COUNCILLOR TONER

WHEREAS: It has long been taught as established history that the City of Newtowne, which would be renamed to the City of Cambridge in 1638, was colonized by the English in 1630, a process which in fact continues to this day; and

WHEREAS: While this is historically accurate, for centuries the story of those who already lived in and occupied this land (which was originally known as Anmoughcawgen prior to the English colonialism) has been all but whitewashed out of existence, subject to erasure, and the story of how this land was stolen from them has been conveniently swept aside, transforming their very existence into a mere historical footnote as the forerunner of when the “real” story of this region began; and

WHEREAS: Such historical whitewashing is disrespectful of those who originally called this land home, and a great distortion of the historical record of the lives, legacies, and achievements of the very real people who originally lived on this land; and

WHEREAS: Indeed, it is critical that, as we consider this matter from the vantage point of 2022, we acknowledge that this touches upon not just the theft of land, but the erasure of actual *people*; and

WHEREAS: In recent years, there has been growing momentum for municipalities like Cambridge to formally acknowledge the fact that our cities have been built upon stolen land, and while there is much to admire about the community that Cambridge has evolved into over the centuries, our story is incomplete without acknowledging those that our predecessors wrongfully displaced, and while we cannot undo the sins of the past, we can and must incorporate the stories of those who preceded the English colonialists into our larger historical narrative, and we must strive to do right by the descendants of those Indigenous Peoples; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Council formally go on record in acknowledging that the City of Cambridge occupies land that remains/is still home of the Massachusetts Tribe, a vibrant and thriving community of people who are currently displaced from their position as sovereign owners of this land; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Council go on record acknowledging that while the modern day City of Cambridge cannot go back and undo the sins committed by our predecessors almost four centuries ago, we can and must incorporate a more nuanced, more truthful telling of our historical narrative to ensure that the stories of the Indigenous Peoples who originally occupied this land are not lost to history; and be it further

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ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to convene an advisory group to determine ways in which the City can work to lift up the voices and experiences of the descendants of the Indigenous People who currently reside in our community, and in which the City can engage in purposeful relationships/relationship building with the Indigenous People of this area; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner.

History:
10/03/22 City Council

ORDER ADOPTED AS AMENDED



City of Cambridge

O-1
FIRST IN COUNCIL
October 3, 2022

COUNCILLOR SIMMONS
COUNCILLOR AZEEM
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WHEREAS: While this is historically accurate, for centuries the story of those who already lived in and occupied this land has been all but whitewashed out of existence, subject to erasure, and the story of how this land was stolen from them has been conveniently swept aside, transforming their very existence into a mere historical footnote as the forerunner of when the “real” story of this region began; and

WHEREAS: Such historical whitewashing is disrespectful of those who originally called this land home, and a great distortion of the historical record of the lives, legacies, and achievements of the very real people who originally lived on this land; and

WHEREAS: Indeed, it is critical that, as we consider this matter from the vantage point of 2022, we acknowledge that this touches upon not just the theft of land, but the erasure of actual *people*; and

WHEREAS: In recent years, there has been growing momentum for municipalities like Cambridge to formally acknowledge the fact that our cities have been built upon stolen land, and while there is much to admire about the community that Cambridge has evolved into over the centuries, our story is incomplete without acknowledging those that our predecessors wrongfully displaced, and while we cannot undo the sins of the past, we can and must incorporate the stories of those who preceded the English colonialists into our larger historical narrative, and we must strive to do right by the descendants of those Indigenous Peoples; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Council formally go on record in acknowledging that the City of Cambridge occupies land that was once home of the Massachusetts Tribe, a vibrant and thriving community of people who were wrongfully displaced from their homeland, among other indigenous peoples who lived here; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Council go on record acknowledging that while the modern day City of Cambridge cannot go back and undo the sins committed by our predecessors almost four centuries ago, we can and must incorporate a more nuanced, more truthful telling of our historical narrative to ensure that the stories of the indigenous peoples who originally occupied this land are not lost to history; and be it further

Attachment: Original Policy Order #1 (POR 2022 #179 : Policy Order Re The Indigenous Peoples Of Cambridge)

- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to review the current cultural sensitivity training for all City employees and ensure that it explicitly includes and highlights the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in all cultural sensitivity trainings going forward; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to convene an advisory group to determine ways in which the City can work to lift up the voices and experiences of the descendants of the Indigenous People who currently reside in our community, and in which the City can engage in purposeful relationships/relationship building with the Indigenous People of this area; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner.

In City Council October 3, 2022.
Adopted by a ye and nay vote:-
Yeas 8; Nays 1; Absent 0.
Attest:- Diane P. LeBlanc, City Clerk

A true copy;

ATTEST:-



Diane P. LeBlanc,
City Clerk