**Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)**

**Unofficial Note on Cambridge City Council Work Session**

**Monday, July 5, 2021**

**In Person Meeting and Virtual, 6:00 pm**

**Submitted by Alison Kennedy**

**Discussion about a Human Resources (HR) job position**

This meeting was held to discuss the pros and cons of changing the City Charter to hire a Director of HR Management or leave it unchanged. Currently, the Charter only allows for an assistant HR position to assist the City Manager.

* A speaker talked in favor of changing the City Charter to include an HR Director because she felt it would better meet the needs of the city employees. It was felt city management could be enhanced with an HR Department to handle employee needs, specifically.
  + It was brought up that the police department employees are due back pay and have not gotten raises for years. The police department is losing members all the time. Nurturing a strong police department has been one of the goals of the City Council. However, the HR director being discussed here would not be responsible for addressing police department issues and/or ensuring that the police department attracts talented individuals who will stay.
  + All council members voiced their opinions on the HR issues. All council members agreed that something must be done to do a better job of handling the issues of the city employees.
  + Council members expressed concerns about what was the best way to handle the HR issues. Opinions were divided on changing the City Charter.
* Open consultation was held with the City Attorney at the meeting to interpret the language of the City Charter as it is currently written in Section F concerning the job of an HR person.
  + The attorney explained that the Charter must be in alignment with procurement services.
  + No additional power would be given to the City Attorney in the Charter.
* In the general discussion, it was asked what was the job description of the HR person.
  + It was stated that the HR person would be involved in the hiring and firing processes.

Annual reviews, interviews, payroll, training, employee record keeping, forms and other paperwork would be done by the HR person.

* + Currently, the City Charter considers this an assistant position answering to the City Manager.
  + It is not written as a department head which is governed by advice and consent.
* Comments were made that the city employees should have an HR department to handle work concerns and complaints.
* Pat Escher, a staff member with 30 years of government service, commented that in her experience, an HR assistant to the City Manager does not work. Things have always fallen through the cracks.

**Floor Opened for Comments by City Employees**

* Comment from the floor that at this city government facility, there had been no employee reviews conducted for 4 or 5 years. Comment included the fact that direction to perform reviews had always come from the City Manager to the department heads when to conduct employee reviews. Currently, there has been no direction given for a long time.
* Comment made by a city employee that he had had trouble with a co-worker threatening him at the worksite and harassing him off-site as well. He felt there were no proper channels in place to address this and stop it from happening.
* Comment made by a person who had experience working in the city government of Annapolis. In Annapolis, the HR department was a separate entity from the City Manager.
* The mayor commented that Annapolis was run a little differently than Cambridge in that the city mayor was the focal point of the city government than a council of elected officials as in Cambridge.
* City Manager commented that he would welcome the help of an HR person based on the current job description in the City Charter.
* The mayor asked for the City Attorney to read the HR job description as it is written in the City Charter.
* After the City Attorney the description, the Mayor reiterated that this is the crux of the matter. Can the HR issues be addressed properly following the current Charter or should it be amended? The Charter clearly states that the HR person is an assistant and not a director or head of a department. He restated that everyone on the Council is in favor of more being done to address the HR issue.
* The President of the Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN) commented that the City Council should be concentrating their efforts on raising funds to fill the staffing holes in the city government. He felt that the members should not get sidetracked into amending the City Charter.
* The mayor asked all Council members to come with proposals to the next work session in August on how to best solve the HR issues that the city was currently experiencing.

Meeting was adjourned.