Boats in a harbor with boats

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Unofficial Notes for City Commission Meeting

Monday, April 14, 2025 6:00 pm

Mayor to Convene Commission in Regular Session

All Ward commissioners present, Mayor present

Agenda

* Mayor and Commission to approve or amend agenda as presented.

***Motion approved to amend Consent Agenda and move #5 item, Mainstreet Second Saturday events to the New Business section of the meeting and seconded. All commissioners voted 5-0.***

Presentations from the Approved Guests - None

Consent Agenda

2. Meeting Minutes a. March 15, 2025, Goal Setting Work Session b. March 17, 2025, Regular Session c. March 24, 2025, Work Session d. March 24, 2025, Regular Session 3. Minary’s Dream Alliance is seeking to hold “Community Outreach” on Friday April 18, 2025, from 12pm to 3pm at Cosby Avenue Park.

4. Amber Dobson is seeking to hold “Awareness Walk for Autism” on Sunday April 27, 2025, from 11:45 am-2pm beginning at Long Wharf. Rain date of Monday April 28, 2025.

5. ***moved to New Business*** – ***Second Saturdays***

6. Jessica Cook, Events Manager of Dorchester Banner is seeking to hold “ Stars of the Banner” on Thursday May 22, 2025, from 4:30pm to 8pm at Gerry Boyle Park at Great Marsh. Rain date of Thursday May 29, 2025

7. Agape Temple of Praise & Ministries is seeking to hold “ Community Outreach” on Saturday June 7, 2025, from 12pm to 4pm at 815 Center Street. Road closure on Center Street from 11am to 5pm.

8. Vice President of Uproar is seeking to hold “Uproar Anniversary/Memorial Ride for Fallen Club Member” on Saturday June 28, 2025, from 4pm to 2am at the Dorchester Elks Lodge #223, 618 Pine Street. Road closure from 3:30pm to 2am in 600 Block of Pine Street.

9. Cambridge Main Street is seeking to hold the following events: a. “May the 4th Fest” on Saturday May 3, 2025, from 12pm-5pm in the downtown area. Road closure from 10am-6pm on Poplar Street and 300 block of Gay Street. b. “Glizzy Fest” on Saturday October 18, 2025, from 12pm-5pm in the downtown area. Road Closure from 10am-6:30pm on Poplar Street and 300 block of Gay Street.

Ordinances for First Reading - none

Ordinances for Second Reading – none

Old Business - none

New Business

***5. (moved from Consent Agenda)*** - Christina Wingate-Spence, Executive Director of Main Street is seeking to hold “2nd Saturdays on Main Street” on May 10th, June 14th, July 12th, August 9th, September 13th and October 11th from 3pm to 10pm in the downtown area. Road closure on Poplar Street, 400 Block of Race Street and Gay St. There have been complaints from business owners about the hours required for this event.

Discussion

* B. Summers, Ward 1 – He is a member of the Main Street organization and has received complaints from some members of the Main Street business organization about the revival of the Second Saturday events and keeping businesses open from 3 PM – 10 PM.

B. Roche, Ward 5 – Happy to see the Second Saturday revival. The time change is incidental. Complaints must be coming from businesses that are open 9 AM – 5 PM on Saturdays. Need to view the complaints to get more information to make a decision.

G. Steckman, City Manager – Second Saturdays are good for tourism and should proceed.

S. Cephas, President and Ward 4 – There has always seemed to be a divide in the Main Street organization. He has had communication issues with the organization in the past. would like to see more of the events occurring on Pine St. instead of always being on Popular and Race Sts. Groove City always made it a point to have events on Pine St.

B Roche, Ward 5 – I have a lot of data that I can show you that Main Street has worked hard to unify the districts that were so tragically divided – Race and Pine. I am proud of their efforts. However, I do not disagree with you that the events are always on Poplar and Race.

F. Stout, Ward 3 – All that has been said he agrees with. He has nothing to add.

S. Lewis-Sisco, Ward 2 - Supports Main Street but also supports what S. Cephas from Ward 4 said about having more events on Pine St.

Note: The motion below had been raised earlier about the March 24 minutes. Repeated here due to recording issues on townhall streams.com.

Motion to amend the March 24 City Council Regular Session Minutes by taking out item 1 from the Closed Session discussion was approved and seconded. Commissioners voted 5-0.

10. RESOLUTION NO. 25-07 A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CAMBRIDGE REQUESTING THE CITY MANAGER TO ANALYZE HUMAN RESOURCES CAPABILITIES, ENSURE POSITION JUSTIFICATION, AND EXPAND CANDIDATE SEARCH TO SELECT THE MOST QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL

F. Stout, Ward 3 composed this resolution. It was sent to the city lawyer to write it.

Motion to approve resolution to expand candidate search and seconded.

Discussion

S Cephas, President – Feels this resolution is overkill. The city manager was hired because of his expertise to handle hiring n hiring qualified individuals. This resolution is essentially telling him how to do his job. In addition, it is only about the human resources department. If we follow a process for one department, we should be following the same process for all departments.

B. Summers, Ward 1 - I agree with President Cephas.

S. Lewis-Sisco, Ward 2 – I agree that there should be a formal process of hiring that applies to all departments. I trust that the city manager knows his job well along these lines. Mr Stout should have chance to talk to the city manager and discuss unresolved issues.

B. Roche, Ward 5 – This resolution clarifies and formalizes what the commissioners had talked about. There is nothing in here that specifies this applies only to the HR department.

a. City Manager Glenn Steckman - He is disappointed that no one came to him to discuss this resolution before sending it to the city lawyer. The city employees have said to him that they do not feel they have total vote of confidence from the commissioners.

F. Stout, Ward 3 – sent an email on April 9 to Glenn Steckman, city manager and Patrick Thomas, city lawyer and did not receive a response. Is concerned that the city pool of employees is small pool.

Mayor L. Cephas – The city employees may be a small pool to choose from but it is an excellent pool of talent.

B. Roche, Ward 1- There is nothing derogatory in this resolution. Encourages the public to read the resolution.

Council Action

Motion changed to table the resolution until \*(June 30, 2025) after the budget process and seconded. \* Mayor changed the date to July 30, 2025 and seconded. Ward commissioners vote 3 yes, 2 no.

11. Award of Contract for Cannery Park Phase 1B a. Council Agenda Report from City Engineer Carl “Bucky” Jackson, P.E.

* Mr Jackson recommended that the council approve the bid by David Bramble for Phase 1B of Cannery Park.
* The scope of work for this contract is the construction of a dog park just south of the recently completed Cannery Park Pavillion.
* Installation of benches and trash cans
* Clearing of approximately 1 acre to the north of the Pavillion in preparation for the next phase of Cannery Park.
* There is a lot of rubble around the smokestacks. They can’t evaluate one of the smokestacks because of all the debris.

Discussion

* B. Summers, Ward 1 –
* Why don’t we use a contractor from Cambridge?
* Bramble is from Chestertown. Harper from Easton and Hill-Kimmel from Cambridge.
* City Manager, G. Steckman –
* This is a $2 m project. County and federal dollars are in this.
* The city has to match some of the dollars. We must get the best price for the community.
* if it was just the city, we would have more leeway to justify using the local firm.

***Motion to approve the contract going to Bramble, Inc. was raised and seconded. Commissioner vote 4 yes, 1 abstain.***

12. Hearn Building Update

a. Council Agenda Report from Director of Planning, Brian Herrmann

The preliminary site plan on the Hearn was approved by the Planning Commission in Sep 2024. The Green Street organization owns the 3 buildings on Race Street - 505, 507 and 509. Building 505 will contain 10 residential units and 509 will contain 34 units. Building 507 will be torn down to make room for 33 parking spaces.

The building at 509 Race will maintain the facade, but there are issues with the stability of the walls. If the walls must come down or be changed, Green Street must get approval by the Historic Preservation Committee.

Hermann concluded his report by saying that text amendments governing the first floor of mixed use buildings in the core district zone, were approved for Ordinance 1099 in 2017, by the Planning Director at the time, Pat Esher. The amendments allowed residential units on the back end of the first floor. The front end, facing Race Street, must be commercial. The actual text changes were never made to the ordinance so the voting process will have to be repeated. Hermann said all text amendment changes to Ordinance 1099 will be coming before the city council for a vote next month. The amendments must first be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

A discussion ensued among the commissioners and Steckman about the Hearn Building project. Steckman commented that construction costs could be reduced by using an alternative plan to meet Adults with Disabilities Act (ADA) instead of putting in an elevator. The city manager suggested that a door could be cut into the side of the building allowing access to the first floor apartments and would satisfy ADA standards.

The most vocal commissioners were Brian Roche (Ward 5) and Brett Summers (Ward 1). Roche and Summers commented that the project does not comply with HUD subsidy guidelines. Roche noted that there was no consultation regarding the demolition of Building 507 and Summers mentioned the big fees going to low cost housing businesses. Mayor Lajan Cephas ended the conversation by saying that there is no housing available for people that have mid income jobs in Cambridge and the Hearn Building project would satisfy that deficit. Regardless of what the city council is feeling, the plan for the Hearn Complex is going forward.

Meetings (All posted on choosecambridge.com)

***Motion raised to accept meetings and seconded. Commissioners vote is 4-0.***

Public Comment

* Laurel Atkiss - need rentals in town. must provide for people who rent.
* Gentleman from Life Management LLC. Gives away free lifeline phones to people who are on Government subsidy.
* He was denied a place on Race Street across from Bradford House, on the days they have food pantries.
* Looking for that kind of traffic in best location. His organization is insured.
  + - S. Lewis-Sisco, Ward 2 - would support free services to people in community that need it.
    - F. Stout, Ward 3 - health dept said that they cannot allow it in their parking lot.
    - B. Roche, Ward 5 - will support any formal process for things like this but is tired of council time being wasted.
    - B. Summers, Ward 1 - can you be on the Bradford House lawn? Maybe
    - Mayor L. Cephas asked about consensus from commissioners
    - Majority of commissioners would like city manager to find a solution. City does not have policy on this but will work with this man.

City Manager Comments

13. Administrative Report from City Manager Glenn Steckman from April 10, 2025

* City landscaping
  + Wayne Suggs is working on getting bushes and trees trimmed around buildings.
  + This will take longer than this year.
* Community outreach
  + Has increased getting notices onto popular social media sites

Commissioners’ Comments

205 Oakley Street

Ward 1, B Summers

* 205 Oakley went before Board of Appeals about returning to multiunit status.
* The Board of Appeals supported the city’s decision to allow the building to return to multiunit status.
* wants better language around Unicode
* Working with Four Eleven Kitchen to start an internship program to train adults on working in the food industry and restaurants

Ward 2, S. Lewis-Sisco

* Agrees with Ward 5 commissioner that there needs to be clear processes in the city to follow.
* Greenwood Ave clean up – High school leaders will be participating. Lewis-Sisco is attending.

Ward 3, F. Stout

* Habitat for Humanity meeting - praised Habitat and Housing Dept in encouraging home ownership.
* Shore Rivers tree planting - will be following their progress.
* Thanks to city manager for Saturday forum - citizens praised session.

Ward 4, President S. Cephas

* Abstained to vote because of conflict of interest.

Concerning Hearn bldg.

we are more intentional about what we do not want to live in downtown (on social media).

Let's be inclusive of all people in the community.

Ward 5, B. Roche

Planting more trees this weekend. Has planted 55 trees in the community. These must have tree wells.

Upset to see cones and sandbags on sewer covers. This means that with all the rain, there was sewage overflow.

Wayne Suggs answered this:

Concerns with a lot of sediment in the sewer lines. Sequence of solutions to this problem and we are working on this.

Commissioner stated he is not against rentals.

Has read many articles on managing rental structures as a city government.

HUD recommends that there are low and high income 20% - 40% subsidy guidelines. Does not recommend 100% subsidy.

Wants to solve the problem to give all people in Cambridge a place to live.

Closed Session

Motion to approve going into closed Session and seconded. All commissioners voted 5-0.

Adjourn 8:17 PM

Notes taken by A. Kennedy, CAN member