

#1. Martha J. Older
19 Cameron Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02140
617-868-3197
Active@ureach.com

#2. Personal.

I am a psychiatric social worker, and I do work at the Community Legal Services and Counseling Center in Cambridge, a nonprofit serving low-income clients. Until recently I did ongoing adult psychotherapy, and still do psychological evaluations of persons seeking asylum in this country, or seeking to stay here under the VAWA provisions which allow for persons to remain after divorcing abusive American spouses. As such I interact with persons of many different cultures and backgrounds.

My background also involves experience on committees and boards of a number of organizations, including four years as a chairman of a board, several years as an Executive Director, and occasional experience in mediation. I have substantial experience in supervision and training. Recently, I have been running my own small business, but am cutting back greatly on that work.

I have long been involved in various social and political causes, including local issues and civic participation in Cambridge. For example, I worked on rent control, and local development issues. I also served on two time-consuming City committees, one on a neighborhood development and one on North Cambridge and Alewife development. I moved to my current address while in graduate school, and do not expect to ever move again – Cambridge is a great place to live! I have been involved in Cambridge elections since I first moved here. I've been a member of the City Committee for over 10 years, and attended two State Conventions. I served as Ward 11's Affirmative Action Officer for several years, and plan to join the State Affirmative Action Committee. I am currently involved in several groups working on the November 2012 elections. I have worked on national, statewide and local campaigns, on issues such as the Supercommittee's voting, and on elections for Secretaries of State – who supervise elections -- here and elsewhere. I have also testified regarding voter ID requirements.

I have advocated for Proportional Representation starting in college, well before moving here. In 2004 I served as an International Election Monitor in El Salvador. I always vote, and have helped to obtain signatures for candidates and to register voters in Cambridge. I have been a poll worker, and have observed the post-voting procedures at two precincts, both as an interested citizen and as a trained International Election Monitor. I found the procedures we use were both impressive and of some concern, as I discuss below.

One of the national issues with which I have been particularly concerned is both the use and misuse of electronic election machines, including Optical Scanners. Following the 2004 election, a group of us put together fact sheets for the Massachusetts Electors, who then made a unanimous statement deploring the procedures and results in Ohio. We then put together a fact-checked 300-page notebook for Senators, and I went down to Washington with five others to successfully lobby Senators to object to the procedures in Ohio and elsewhere. To paraphrase Margaret Mead, "never doubt the power of a small group of concerned citizens to change the world."

I do not anticipate any problems with completing this job, nor any ethical conflicts. I would not be involved in local elections while a Commissioner.

#3. I am interested in this position both because of my general interest in elections and election procedures, and because the Election Commission in Cambridge is one which takes its job very seriously, as a result of which I would anticipate serious attention to issues, and my taking pride in being a part of the Commission.

When observing our election procedures, I found the care used in putting together the ballots and voting results to be noteworthy. At the same time, I found vulnerabilities in our procedures, both post-election and generally, which are of concern.

Several years ago, I requested a fast meeting with the Commissioners in order to discuss concerns with the Optical Scanners while an expert was in town. It took me only ten minutes to set up an appointment for that week. I am very impressed with the concern and professionalism that was shown by the Commission.

I would be very interested in discussing my concerns with the other Commissioners. Cambridge is a community which is already a leader in election issues and can be so even more, and voting is at the heart of the American democratic system. .

#4. Voter Participation.

a. I believe we should be both accessible and active as regards voter registration and actual participation. This includes such measures as going out into the communities to gather registrations, and signs similar to those now used on Inman Street set up across the City about upcoming elections. There could be outreach into minority and immigrant communities, especially those with a language which is primarily non-English, where foreign-language signs could help. We might also consider presentations in the schools, and setting up registration tables in major squares and malls. High school and college students could get school credit for this, and we also could consider internships. We could allow early voting, or absentee voting for any reason, and preregistration of young people. We could also consider allowing voting at age 16 or 17.

b. I am in favor of any methods to increase voter education, so that we may have informed and fuller participation. That includes posting the Voters Bill of Rights, and if possible, discussions of PR voting in grades 6-12. Since voter lists are public information, I see no problem with checking registration status on line, as long as that doesn't replace phoning in.

#5. Having once been erroneously listed as an Independent voter, with a discrepancy between the City and the state about my status, and having seen many active voters listed as inactive, I would be interested in learning more about our current system of record-keeping. I see no problem with the current census procedures, although there might be useful changes in them.

#6. I believe that the Commissioners are essentially a board of directors, and should maintain that policy-making position with regard to the Executive Director, who hires and supervises the staff and day-to-day operations. The Commissioners also hire and train election-day workers.

For a Commission Executive Director, I believe we should do an extensive search, and check references and have several interviews with the final candidates. It would be useful, I think, to interview past Executive Directors as to what factors contributed to their staying or leaving, and what they see as relevant qualifications. The same might be done for staff members, both current and past. Here my administrative, hiring and Executive Director background would be relevant.

When hiring staff, I believe in matching abilities and interests to the job to be done. I am also interested in needs for flexibility, including in exact duties. I value input and ideas, and try to encourage initiative. When I am in charge, I prefer to be a coordinator rather than a director whenever possible. I like meetings with discussion and problem-solving, and have sometimes used my skills as a mediator.

#7. I am not yet sufficiently familiar with the budget to make specific suggestions. However, I have substantial relevant experience. As the Executive Director of a nonprofit for several years, I moved it into the black for the first time in 20 years, while also greatly increasing its activities and staff. Part of this responsibility included proposing, explaining, discussing, administering and managing detailed yearly and summer budgets. I have also been on the budget committees of two daycare centers.

#8. I am not yet sufficiently aware of the day-to-day operations and issues of the Commission. I found the training for election-day workers to be adequate. I definitely favor evening meetings and hearings, and would suggest that not all be on the same day of the week, so that as many members of the public can attend as possible.

I think it is truly desirable that election-day workers be from the same community, in part because they will know at least some of the voters. Also, if possible they should be from major minority groups in those communities and bilingual – especially if many community members are non-English-speaking. It is desirable to include at least some young persons. However, it is very important not to discontinue election-day workers who have already been performing those functions, and not only as a matter of fairness. Such people not only have more familiarity with the procedures, but discontinuing them is bad for overall morale, and leads to less investment in work that is both tedious and stressful.

#9. My experience as a poll worker made it clear that it is important to set up and check machines, supplies, lists and other computer-related procedures, etc., well before the polls open to the public. Adequate time and very thorough checklists should be part of the preparations. There should be adequate signs up indicating the location. The Commissioners should help with these preparations, including the procedures and preparations to be implemented, and clear information as to who is working at which precinct, and substitutes if needed. It should be easy to reach the Commission if needed.

Regarding optical scan machines: As mentioned above, following the 2004 elections I developed an increased interest in American voting procedures and their potential for abuse. In particular, I learned about so-called black box voting machines of various types. Here, my training in statistics and survey methodology has been helpful. Optical scanners are the best of the voting machines, and we now use them to catch over- and under-voting. But even they have some weaknesses; and our machines are programmed by an openly Republican company. The New England owner is apparently of great integrity, but such a procedure is a potential vulnerability. So is the danger our machines might be hacked – for example, by a student wanting to show off to friends.

Ideally, voting should involve paper ballots, hand-counted. I realize this is very unlikely. But there are a number of non-burdensome steps (and limited random audits) which can be taken to better safeguard the integrity of our voting system. I would be interested in suggesting we implement those. I would like to see Cambridge set a standard for others.

In a situation such as the write-in campaign, I would favor postponing the announcement of results until the final count has been made, even though it means waiting. Otherwise it can cause anxiety, disappointment and confusion.

I think the ballots are basically designed well, but there could be longer and clearer directions, preferably written in as simple English as possible. A larger typeface would be helpful, as would instruction in relevant foreign languages, such as Spanish, French, Creole, Chinese (Mandarin and possibly Cantonese), Portuguese and Khmer – in other words, in the major languages spoken in Cambridge. A posted sample filled-in City Council ballot would help. It might be useful to change the fill-in ovals to boxes to check, and/or increase their size – they require real eye-hand coordination. I would also like to see it made clear that someone is available to discuss the procedures with anyone who asks for this help.

#10. As far as I am aware, the School Committee recount, although burdensome and time-consuming, was properly handled. As of now, I don't see a way around this procedure.

To prevent problems with disputed ballots, I would recommend that one of each of the Democratic and Republican Commissioners, as well as representatives of the concerned parties, be available to observe the decisions taken.

Martha Older, p. 5

#11. I favor voting rights for legal immigrants and I favor lowering the voting age. Both these steps would help ensure people owning a "stake" in Cambridge, and hopefully result in better

awareness of local and national issues, and lead to interest in other types of civic involvement. I also favor preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds. I favor same-day registration – especially useful in this city with its large turnover in both residents and exact addresses. Such changes represent a chance to increase registration and voter turnout.

I do not favor a requirement for a photo ID. It has been shown to be discriminatory, especially in regard to elders, students, immigrants and the poor. However, if some actual reason for real concern about possible voting abuse develops, some form of identification or bringing a letter to persons at their home address would help to prevent this.

These changes would increase the load on the Commission – but democracy was not meant to be efficient.

#12. I would like to emphasize my serious interest in this position, and my deep interest in voting participation and voting procedures in this City. I consider being a Commissioner to be a position of trust for the City of Cambridge and its residents. I would expect to work hard to master the various detailed aspects of the work, and would also be interested in meeting with other communities' commissions, both formally and informally. I feel both right for this position, and that it is right for me. It is the only position in this City in which I am interested. If anyone has any additional questions for me after the forum, I would be happy to speak with them at length.

MARTHA J. OLDER, MA, MSW, LCSW

19 Cameron Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140
(617) 868-3197

EDUCATION

MSW, Boston University School of Social Work, 1979
Majors: Casework and Groupwork.

MA, Sociology, Brandeis University, 1979

Concentrations: Race, ethnic and minority relations, social stratification including class, and so-called "deviant" groups and behaviors. Training in statistics and survey methodology. Most doctoral work completed.

Other: BA with Honors in Sociology, Barnard College. NIH Research Traineeship in Alcoholism. Small Group Leadership Training, Greenhouse. Ongoing Continuing Education in Social Work.

GENERAL

My background includes: casework and psychotherapy with all age groups and modalities, intakes and evaluations, including evaluations of asylum and VAWA applicants. Experience with many minorities, including Native American, African-American, African, Hispanic, Cambodian, and Gypsies, Muslims and Buddhists, immigrant, low income, and special needs including emotional. Training and supervision of foster parents, and of volunteers. Related research, fieldwork and volunteer work.

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center, 1999-now. Psychotherapist. Individual psychotherapy and clinical evaluation of individuals applying for VAWA and/or refugee status in this country. Work with their lawyers, including occasional testimony with the immigration system. Work with interpreters.

Integrated Foster Care, 1/91-10/94. Agency served special needs foster-care clients of all types. Among other things, my work included significant work with Cambodian, African-American, and mixed families, home-finding and home studies, training and supervision of foster parents, testifying in court cases, and substantial work with interpreters.

Other clinical and administrative work: Shortstop, Relief Resources, Oxford Street Day Care, Tri-City Mental Health Center, West-Ros-Park Mental Health Center, Project Place, Mass General walk-in psychiatric service ("APS"), houseparent, work with girl inmates and in-patients. Substantial clinical and evaluation work, crisis work and crisis intervention, general social work, and some administrative work. Substantial substitute work in special-needs institutions of all kinds. Among others, groups worked with included African-Americans, Gypsies, Cambodians, mentally ill, special needs, and addicts.

ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Organizational and administrative work including daycare, aftercare and elementary school, including Boards of Directors and a Coordinating Committee, and committees on budgets, personnel, outreach and affirmative action, and year-round and afterschool childcare.

Founded, organized and coordinated The Typists' Cooperative, a very successful fifteen-year free-lance organization of editors, typists and word-processors.

Additional administrative and supervisory, search, hiring and training work including offices, the Nameless Coffeehouse, foster parents, daycare and primary school settings and many others.

Daycare and related: Extensive substitute daycare teaching and teaching-aide work, and some afterschool substitute teaching.

Writing, editing and word-processing: Highly skilled, with extensive experience.

Minority groups: Experience with Hispanic, African-American, Cambodian, Native American, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, African, Haitian, low-income, immigrant, special needs, LGBT, women, alcoholics, so-called deviant, and other populations.

Languages: Some French, German and Swedish. Smattering of other languages, including Spanish (which I am working on) and Kreyol.

Fieldwork and research: Assistantships and other work with rape victims, minorities, "deviants," alcoholics, and welfare recipients. Extensive advocacy, clinical and social-psychology experience.

Voting rights and participation background: Civil rights movement. Methodology and statistics studies. Additional self-education and activism starting in 2000. Includes GOTV and other work with issues and candidates on the national, Secretaries of State, state and local level, and general local voter registration. Served as an International Election Monitor. In 2004, helped put together a 300-page fact-checked notebook for Senators and then lobbied and helped convince them to challenge Ohio. Have participated in and observed the Election Commission's process. Currently involved with four groups for Elizabeth Warren and general Massachusetts issues.

Democratic Party: Active ward member and participant for over ten years. Affirmative Action Officer for several years. GOTV and other work on issues, registration and candidates for many years, long before and during my ward membership.