



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA • MAY 4, 2020

Regular Meeting

Sullivan Chamber

5:30 PM

Cambridge City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139

I. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA

1. Transmitting Communication from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of \$20,000 from Free Cash to the General Fund Executive Department/Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative (DGBVPI) Other Ordinary Maintenance account to support additional emergency services related to the COVID-19 crisis in partnership with Transition House.

CMA 2020 #94

This communication announces that the City will use \$20,000 in funding to provide domestic violence victims and survivors with hotel rooms and other supplies they need to leave abusive situations. Our 911 operators and human services providers had been seeing a drop in calls since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting survivors may stay in dangerous situations out of fear of contracting Coronavirus. The Police Department has seen a recent spike, however, in both the number of domestic violence calls received, and in the intensity of the situations. That's why I worked with the Mayor and City staff to secure this funding to ensure domestic violence survivors can escape these situations and be put on a better path while being protected from COVID-19. This appropriation corresponds with the "quarantined, but not alone" campaign [Transition House](#), a community leader in domestic violence intervention and prevention, has been spearheading to encourage survivors to come forward. As the Stay at Home Advisory remains in effect, we're also exploring ways to utilize our Silent911 and Smart911 systems to ensure victims can silently and safely make emergency calls from their homes, even when isolated with an abuser. [Click here](#) for a list of COVID-19 domestic violence resources.

This item was adopted.

2. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the reappointment of Larry Ward as an Election Commissioner for a term of 4 years, effective April 1, 2020.

CMA 2020 #95

This item was placed on file on the consent agenda (no discussion).

3. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to an update on COVID-19.

CMA 2020 #96

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The City Council received a COVID-19 update from senior City staff. City Manager Louis A. DePasquale began by announcing two new initiatives aimed at uplifting local small businesses.

Small Business Relief Program: Using \$500,000 from the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund and \$1.6 million in funding from the CARES Act, eligible small businesses can receive grants of up to \$10,000 to help pay rent, utilities, employee salaries, and more. Accompanying this is a \$1.5 million, 0% interest loan program being created by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. A small business could receive a \$15,000 loan, or three months of business expenses, whichever is lower, under this new program. Together, these two initiatives will infuse \$3.6 million into our local small business community, and, as the Chair of the Economic Development and University Relations Committee, I am grateful to see these programs be announced after several weeks of work by Mayor Siddiqui, the City Manager, myself, and other City staff. For more information on the Small Business Relief Program, [click here](#).

Small Business Advisory Committee: The City Manager also announced that [the Small Business Recovery Advisory Committee members have been chosen](#) and are meeting for the first time today, May 5th, 2020. This Committee was created by a policy order Councillor Simmons and I previously filed, and I am thankful to see such swift action on the City's part in appointing the Committee. Our local small businesses have been hit especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, so this Committee, primarily made up of community leaders from local businesses and business associations will grant us critical insight into the support they need from the City as we begin to think about reopening.

Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund update: The remaining \$3.7 million in [the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund](#) will continue to go towards Cambridge residents and families in financial need. While applications will be closing soon, the City has expanded these relief efforts so that residents that have already received assistance can continue to access monthly relief for two more months. To date, 474 applications have been approved for the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund, with \$622,583 distributed to Cambridge residents and families in need. The phone line set up to guide residents through the application process has received 600 calls so far, with a third of calls being directed to our language line that offers support in seven different languages, and a third of calls coming from residents in public housing. [Click here](#) to apply for financial assistance through the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund, or [click here](#) to donate.

Construction Updates: A [Construction Advisory Group](#) was similarly appointed to plan for safely reopening construction projects. The City Manager also noted that Deputy City Manager Lisa Peterson will be leading the City's return to work planning efforts, which will focus on crafting employee policy and support, developing related public health guidelines, reopening municipal buildings, and resuming regular City meetings. To better support our homeless residents, meals programs have been expanded to serve dinner every night, rather than three nights a week, additional handwashing stations and public bathrooms (which are cleaned four times a day) were placed in Harvard Square, access to electricity has been expanded, and, as the closure of municipal buildings (including the Multiservice Center, where many homeless residents receive mail) has impacted the ability of homeless residents to receive mail, the City is working with the Central Square Business Improvement District to ensure our homeless residents get their mail.

Citywide Testing announced: City Manager DePasquale also announced that free COVID-19 testing will be made available to all Cambridge residents over the age of eight through a testing site being created at

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the Cambridge Health Alliance East Cambridge Care Center. Drive through, walk-up, and bike service will be available to those who make an appointment Monday-Friday, 9 am-4 pm. This crucial testing will enable everyone who needs testing is able to access it, and will help us ensure our [Cambridge case count data](#) is as accurate as possible. As Councillor Simmons noted during discussion, the City should work towards opening another testing site in the Port neighborhood, where we're seeing a high number of positive test results.

Masks: The City Manager provided an update on [Cambridge's Emergency Order](#) requiring the use of masks or other face coverings in public. It was clarified that our Emergency Order goes further than [the Emergency Order put into place by Governor Baker](#) because it is specific to our City. In a dense, urban environment like Cambridge, it is especially critical that masks be worn because physical distancing is much more difficult here than it may be in Western Massachusetts or on the Cape. It was also emphasized that the Police Department is prioritizing educational enforcement, and has been distributing masks to residents they see not wearing a face covering, with fines being used as an absolute last resort, after the grace period ends. A number of [mask distribution sites](#) have also been created to ensure every Cambridge resident has the resources they need to stay healthy. The demand for personal protective equipment has been so high that the City has ordered 12,000 more masks, which we expect to arrive today. As we continue to weather this pandemic, we must ensure we have high-quality masks on-hand to distribute to our residents.

Police update: Commissioner Branville Bard continued by noting that the citation enforcement tool the Cambridge Police Department uses collects demographic information, such as race and gender, as well as information on enforcement type, so they will be able to provide that information. The Commissioner additionally provided an update on the [temporary emergency homeless shelter](#) being operated at the War Memorial Recreation Center. A distinct space has been allocated to allow residents to virtually participate in City Council meetings, while maintaining the privacy of other residents who do not want their voices or images to be recorded. He also noted that two individuals have been evicted from the War Memorial for conduct issues, one for serious property damage and another for making threats of assault. In the future, a three-step grievance procedure will be used before a resident can be evicted.

School meal site partnerships:

The City's STEAM Initiative has partnered with [Food For Free](#) to provide STEAM activities alongside meal bags at [school meals distribution sites](#). Additionally, a three-part learning group was virtually held on to instruct 40 staff members on delivering STEAM activities remotely.

In partnership with the Cambridge Public Libraries, 60 boxes of books were distributed to students at our school meals distribution sites, and additional books were distributed to residents at the War Memorial shelter. Mayor Siddiqui and I had been working on ensuring residents at the War Memorial had access to library materials, so I am grateful for this effort. Lee also emphasized the importance of staying informed during these challenging times, and encouraged residents to sign up for the City's nightly COVID-19 email updates, which you can do by [clicking here](#).

Public health update: Currently, there have been [768 positive cases of COVID-19](#) in Cambridge, and 60 deaths. Most of these devastating fatalities are from our nursing homes and assisted living facilities. 15% of our positive cases have recovered, so far, mirroring recovery rates at the state and federal level.

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He noted that the CDC [recently reclassified COVID-19 symptoms](#), now including loss of taste and smell, shaking, chills, and more in the list of possible Coronavirus symptoms. Our Public Health team will be reviewing death certificates going back to the start of this year, when testing was less accessible and more residents may have unknowingly been carriers, to potentially reclassify prior deaths as resulting from COVID-19.

The City's [COVID-19 Expert Advisory Panel](#) is currently studying our data to see if our cases are beginning to plateau, and exploring more ways we may be able to flatten the curve of infection. Claude also noted that [the City's case count](#) has been updated to include positive cases by zip code, as well as the racial/ethnic data that I requested. The numbers show that black residents are three times more likely than white residents to contract COVID-19, and Latinx residents are similarly disproportionately impacted by Coronavirus, so it is critical that the City work to address these health disparities present, and do more to support our communities of color during this time of need. 20% of our patient profiles are still incomplete (compared to 50% of patient profiles at the state level), so the Public Health Department will continue to collect more information from COVID-19 positive residents so our data is as accurate as possible.

The Public Health Department is also working with the housing sector to provide guidance on sanitization and how to physically distance in large residential buildings. A third round of COVID-19 testing is being conducted at our [nursing homes and assisted living facilities](#), including standard nasal swabs and additional antibodies testing. As the first round of testing showed high levels of infection among residents and staff of these facilities, a Task Force was launched to provide assistance. In addition to providing medical guidance, the Task Force helps these facilities procure personal protective equipment, responds to staff and supply shortages, offers emotional support, and more.

To expand testing efforts for our homeless community, [Heading Home](#) staff and residents were tested for COVID-19, and additional testing will be available this Thursday, May 7th, at the Senior Center, for any homeless resident, regardless of symptom or shelter status. Those who test positive will be [transported to a hotel for self-isolation](#) under the State's program, while those who test negative will be eligible for admission to the War Memorial shelter.

Moving forward, the Public Health Department is exploring new ways to address the needs of seniors, particularly those living in public housing ([click here](#) for a list of COVID-19 resources for seniors), and educating residents on the [Emergency Order on masks](#).

This item was placed on file.

II. CALENDAR

CHARTER RIGHT

1. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to review the recommendations listed above with the appropriate City personnel with a view toward establishing clear guidelines that will allow for the re-opening of construction projects across the City, and to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner.

CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED IN COUNCIL APRIL 27, 2020

POR 2020 #93

This order, which was filed by Councillor Simmons, asks the City Manager to consider adopting a set of guidelines that would allow for construction in Town Homes, allow the use of virtual platforms to perform inspections when possible, allow paused construction projects to submit COVID-19 safety plans, and more. Councillor Zondervan previously exercised his charter-right on this order, as it was submitted late and additional time was needed to review its content. As these guidelines echo the requests we have been receiving from our local construction professionals, especially affordable housing developers, I am hopeful that we will be able to support the needs of our community in a way that is safe for construction workers. This order was amended to include my amendment to refer the order to [the recently established Construction Advisory Group](#). By referring the order to the Construction Advisory Group, we can get critical insight from industry experts and those who will be affected most by the order. As the Construction Advisory Group has union representation as well, they can also help us ensure that the health and safety of construction workers are prioritized in all construction reopening plans.

This order was adopted as amended.

ON THE TABLE

2. That the City Manager is requested to direct the City Solicitor, Community Development, Public Works, Inspectional Services and any other related departments to review the proposed amendments regarding the prohibition of Natural Gas Infrastructure in New Buildings.

TABLED ON JANUARY 27, 2020

POR 2019 #339

No action was taken.

3. That the “2020 Cycling Safety Ordinance” be forwarded to the Ordinance Committee for discussion and recommendation.

TABLED ON MARCH 23, 2020

POR 2020 #50

No action was taken.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to Awaiting Report Item Number 18-108, regarding a report on offering early voting in City Council and School Committee Elections.

PENDING RESPONSE FROM LEGISLATURE

CMA 2018 #286

No action was taken.

V. POLICY ORDER AND RESOLUTION LIST

1. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the Economic Development Division of the Community Development Department to create a plan for how the City will support small, local businesses in recovering from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including use of existing city resources and CARES Act funding to provide additional support, such as individual coaching to support businesses as they are allowed to return to work

Vice Mayor Mallon, Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor Simmons

POR 2020 #94

This order, sponsored by Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor Simmons, and myself, asks the Economic Development Division of the Community Development Department to plan for supporting small businesses during this pandemic. Our local small businesses need access to things like coaching on how to adapt their business models to current circumstances, technical assistance as their businesses move online, and guidance on how to apply for financial assistance to help keep them afloat. While these are extremely challenging times to operate a small business, I am hopeful that, with this effort and all of the Economic Development Division's other small business relief programs, we will emerge from this public health crisis with a recognizable Main Street that can continue to serve as the community foundation we know and love. [Click here](#) for a list of COVID-19 resources for businesses.

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

2. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the Director of Cambridge Public Libraries to explore ways in which physical library materials can be made available to Cambridge Public Schools students and other Cambridge residents during the COVID-19 pandemic

Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Nolan, Mayor Siddiqui

POR 2020 #95

This policy order asks the City Manager to work with the Director of Cambridge Public Libraries to explore ways we could safely distribute physical library materials to our students and other residents. As our students engage in remote learning, they critically need access to physical library materials, both to enhance their education and encourage a love of learning, as well as to support their mental health in these stressful times. While there are [e-materials available](#), our students are spending more and more time looking at screens with virtual learning, and online platforms being the main way they can stay connected to their friends. Low-income students who may have limited access to computers or internet service, or who cannot afford to maintain a private, at-home library, could especially benefit from having physical library materials as well. By utilizing the existing online reservation system, and by creating designated pick-up windows, [or using the existing school meal sites](#), we would be able to distribute these crucial resources to students in need while preventing any additional risk for COVID-19 transmission. To ensure the staff that would be directly servicing this effort are heard and that their health and safety are prioritized, this order was amended to ask the City Manager to confer with the Cambridge Public Libraries Staff Association as well.

This order was adopted as amended.

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3. The City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the Cambridge Arts Council and other relevant departments to determine an appropriate public memorial for members of the Cambridge community who have been lost as a result of this COVID-19 virus.

Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Toomey, Councillor Carlone

POR 2020 #96

This order, filed by Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor Toomey, Councillor Carlone, and myself, asks the City Manager to work with the Cambridge Arts Council to create a public memorial for Cambridge residents who have passed away from COVID-19. This loss of life has had a devastating impact on our community, and it is only fitting that we ensure the life and legacy of the residents we have lost are honored by a memorial. This order was amended to add Councillor Simmons as a co-sponsor.

This order was adopted as amended.

4. That the City of Cambridge declares May 4, 2020, “Kent State Martyrs Remembrance Day,” and declares May 15, 2020, “Jackson State Martyrs Remembrance Day,” and invite all Cambridge residents to learn about and reflect on the tragic events that occurred on those days

Councillor Zondervan

POR 2020 #97

This order was adopted.

5. That the City Manager enhance the data center to include information which the City Council deems essential to facilitating our collective response to the COVID-19 crisis

Councillor Zondervan

POR 2020 #98

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

6. That the City Manager restart Planning Board meetings virtually and prioritize the completion of any special permits that are in process.

Councillor Zondervan

POR 2020 #99

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

7. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the appropriate City personnel to devise a plan that will place Cambridge on a path to offer free covid-19 tests to all Cambridge residents, similar to that recently enacted by the City of Somerville <<https://www.somervillema.gov/covid19testing>>, and to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner

Councillor Simmons

POR 2020 #100

This order originally asked the City Manager to create a plan that would offer free COVID-19 testing to all Cambridge residents. As it was announced earlier in the meeting that the City would be doing just that, the order was amended to ask the City Manager to work with the Cambridge Health Alliance to open COVID-19 testing sites in areas where communities of color have been the hardest hit by Coronavirus. The Public Health Department recently published the racial/ethnic demographic data I requested for [the City’s COVID-19 case count](#), and the numbers show that black and Latinx residents are disproportionately likely to test positive for Coronavirus. Expanding testing further for these hardest-hit

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residents will ensure that our numbers are truly representative of the effect this pandemic and its related health disparities are having on our communities of color, and that these individuals are able to receive comprehensive follow-up care if they do test positive.

This order was adopted as amended.

8. That the City Manager work with the IT Department to design a system for video conferencing and public comment during the City Council and other official meetings that allows the administrator of the meeting to prevent, eject, and recover from any bad actors attempting to disrupt the meeting.

Councillor Zondervan

POR 2020 #101

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

9. That the City Manager be and is hereby requested to review the order and align it with guidelines promulgated by the CDC, WHO, Dr. Fauci, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to make clear face coverings are required in public settings only when physical distancing is not possible

Councillor Nolan, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, Councillor Zondervan

POR 2020 #102

This policy order asks the City Manager to change the City's Emergency Order requiring the use of masks or other face coverings to only apply when physical distancing is not possible, to reduce or eliminate the related fine for noncompliance, and to request demographic information on any fines administered be made available. Councillor Zondervan exercised his charter-right so the City Council could receive clarity on how [the Governor's Emergency Order on Masks](#) could affect [Cambridge's Emergency Order on Masks](#).

Councillor Zondervan exercised his charter-right.

10. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the Assistant City Manager for Human Services and other relevant City personnel to determine whether summer camps and youth-programming will be allowed to proceed this summer, to put together contingency plans for Cambridge youth in the event that these programs must be scaled back or canceled due to the covid-19 response.

Councillor Simmons

POR 2020 #103

This order asks the City Manager to work with City staff to determine whether the City's typical summer youth programming will be able to happen this summer, and to develop alternatives if they cannot. This item was placed on the table (no vote was taken, and it will appear on next week's agenda) to allow for further discussion on what other departments, such as the Cambridge Public Schools, whose buildings house some of the programs, should be included in this conversation.

This item was placed on the table.