



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA • MAY 11, 2020

Regular Meeting

Sullivan Chamber

5:30 PM

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

I. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA

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

CMA 2020 #97

City staff gave a COVID-19 update.

Small Business Relief Program Update: Last week, the City announced [a new Small Business Relief Program](#), including a grant program where small businesses can receive up to \$10,000 (funded by using \$500,000 from the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund, and a combined \$1.6 million from Community Development Block Grant Funds and Federal CARES Act Funds administered by the City), and a 0% loan program offering loans of up to \$15,000 (funded by using \$1.5 million from the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority). Through both initiatives, a small business can receive up to \$25,000, or up to three months' business expenses, whichever is lower, in relief. [Eligibility guidelines were released](#) last week, and applications will be open from Thursday, May 14th to Friday, June 12th. After June 12th, applications will be reviewed, and if any additional money is left afterward, new applications will be considered on a rolling basis. A total of \$3.6 million will be infused into our local small business community from this grant and loan program, and I could not be more thankful to see quick movement on this after I worked with Mayor Siddiqui, the Economic Development Division, and the CRA on this for several weeks. Our small local businesses are our community's foundation, and providing them with much needed-financial relief is a key way we can ensure their survival and growth. [Click here](#) for a list of COVID-19 resources for businesses, or find more information on the grant program [here](#).

COVID-19 Testing Update: On Friday, May 8th, the City opened its first [universal COVID-19 testing site in East Cambridge](#). Anyone above the age of eight can make an appointment to get tested for free, regardless of immigration or insurance status, and whether they have symptoms. Appointments are being scheduled Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm, and can be made by calling 617-665-2928. Testing is a critical way that we can ensure our public health data is as accurate as possible, that our residents get the care they need, and that we can focus our COVID-19 efforts on the people who need it most. As Councillor Simmons emphasized the need to expand testing efforts in the Port, which was hit hard by Coronavirus, plans to create mobile testing in priority areas were announced. Testing in senior housing buildings overseen by the Cambridge Housing Authority will begin later this week, and testing in the Port will launch next week. The tests will be paid for in part by the generosity of MIT, and this testing is available

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thanks to the Public Health Department's partnership with the Broad Institute and Pro EMS. Read the City's press release on mobile testing [here](#).

Memorial Day: The Veteran's Services Department has made the difficult decision to cancel the Memorial Day Parade, but those who have served will still be honored by a pre-recorded program broadcast on CCTV. City staff will also place flags on graves of the fallen.

Immigration Support: The Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship and De Novo will be hosting a virtual immigration legal screening clinic from 5:15-7:15pm on Wednesday, May 20th. More information can be found [here](#).

Senior Outreach: To ensure our seniors have the resources they need, a Senior Outreach Team has been making calls to Cambridge residents over the age of 70. 7,000 residents have been called so far, with 400 follow-up calls scheduled to check in on residents' well being. The age limit may be lowered to 65 to expand this outreach effort to more elderly residents. [Click here](#) for a list of COVID-19 resources for seniors.

Open Space Update: The Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation has announced that [Riverbend Park and Memorial Drive will not open](#) on Sunday, May 17th, and that they will be in contact with the City in the coming weeks to determine when it is the right time to reopen the areas. Although the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has released guidance allowing municipal golf courses to reopen, [Fresh Pond Golf Course will remain closed](#) to golf activities, and is open for walking use.

Police Update: The Cambridge Police Department has distributed roughly 25,000 masks to date, and is working on procuring more to give out. No fines have been issued so far for noncompliance with the City's [emergency order mandating the use of masks](#) in public. An educational approach is being used when police officers encounter a resident not wearing a face covering, and masks are available at Cambridge Police Headquarters, and in marked patrol cars. A cache of masks is distributed to homeless residents as well. City Solicitor Glowa has determined that Cambridge's stricter emergency order on masks is not in conflict with [the Governor's emergency order](#) on masks, so it will remain in effect.

Recently, the Police Department has experienced an increase in both the number of domestic violence received, and the severity of calls. In the seven weeks before the Stay at Home Advisory was instituted, 74 incidents were recorded, compared to the 95 reported incidents in the seven weeks after the implementation of the Advisory, a 28% uptick. We also know some domestic violence victims don't report, both out of fear of their abuser, and new concerns over COVID-19, so the actual numbers would be higher. These concerning statistics led Mayor Siddiqui and I to partner to secure \$20,000 in funding to provide domestic violence survivors with hotel rooms and other tools they need to escape dangerous situations during COVID-19. [Transition House](#), a community leader in domestic violence prevention and intervention, has also been working diligently on this issue, conducting a "quarantined, but not alone" outreach campaign. As we explore the possibility of using our existing Silent911 and Smart911 systems to allow for emergency calls to be made silently, I am hopeful we will be able to better meet the needs of this vulnerable population. [Click here](#) for a list of COVID-19 domestic violence resources.

Police Commissioner Bard also noted that there has been a concerning increase in cases of child pornography. The Police Department has seen the number of child pornography cases in the past seven weeks that it typically sees over six months, so they must remain vigilant in preventing this abuse.

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At [the emergency homeless shelter](#) located at the War Memorial Recreation Center, a three-step grievance procedure has been created to respond to any behavioral issues, but the human services providers there and the surrounding neighborhood community have not experienced issues lately. With expanded efforts to test homeless residents, the shelter is expanding the clientele it serves.

Construction Advisory Group Update: Earlier this month, the City Manager [appointed a Construction Advisory Group](#) to begin planning for a safe reopening of Cambridge construction projects, following the City's prior [emergency moratorium on construction](#). Comprising City staff, union leadership, developers, university representation, and more, this group has been studying how other municipalities are regulating construction, and is planning to release guidelines soon. Once these guidelines are published, construction work plans can be submitted, and construction could be resumed as early as June.

Small Business Advisory Group Update: The City's [Small Business Advisory Committee](#) has been meeting to devise a safe reopening strategy, considering store capacity, personal protective equipment requirements, and more. Recently, the group has been reimagining the use of our existing public spaces, and how they can be used for outdoor dining, safely queuing customers, and more. They also want to encourage businesses to take part [in the City's program](#), wherein restaurants provide meals to local homeless shelters. 2,600 meals are served to homeless residents each week through this program, and around \$95,000 has been infused into our local economy through this program throughout the past eight weeks.

Public Health Update: Currently, there are [844 confirmed COVID-19 cases](#) in Cambridge, and 71 fatalities. The majority of these heartbreaking deaths are from residents who lived in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. 100 residents have been hospitalized due to COVID-19, and over 130 have completely recovered. With a recovery rate of 15-16%, this statistic mirrors state and national averages.

Our Public Health Department announced they will begin releasing case count information by neighborhood. While they have previously released data by zip code, having this information will help us pinpoint exactly which neighborhoods are more deeply affected by this public health crisis, and where resources should be directed. In addition to now reporting the racial/ethnic data I requested, the Public Health Department is also trying to collect information on occupations, income, and environment, so we can see exactly what factors affect susceptibility.

[A third round of COVID-19 testing](#) was completed in our nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and the results are showing decreasing positivity rates. 28% of facility residents tested positive the first round, compared to 33% the second round, and 12% the third round. 13% of facility staff tested positive the first round, compared to 10% the second round, and 5% the third round. These numbers suggest that the guidance and support being given to nursing homes by our Public Health Department is helping. This third round of testing also included optional antibody testing.

Efforts to expand testing among our homeless community have expanded as well. This past Thursday, COVID-19 testing was conducted at the Senior Center and nearby YMCA, with a total of 80 participants. The test results will provide crucial information that will help us mitigate further spread of COVID-19. Homeless residents who test negative will be eligible for admission to the War Memorial shelter, while those testing positive will be [transported to a hotel for self-isolation under the state's program](#).

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City Reopening: While we do not expect the Governor to require municipalities to completely reopen next Monday with the recently announced [four phase reopening approach](#), City Manager DePasquale shared that the City is planning to be ready to reopen if required. Before this public health crisis began, the City did not allow employees to work from home, but the City Manager has designated a willingness to reevaluate this policy. For some City employees, such as parents or those who are immuno-compromised, the ability to work from home when possible is critical, so I am hopeful the City will remain flexible to accommodate the needs of our employees.

This item was placed on file.

2. Transmitting Communication from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the FY2021 submitted budget appropriation orders.

CMA 2020 #98

This communication contains the City Manager's proposed budget appropriations for the 2021 Fiscal Year. General expenditures for departments and City-run programs are outlined, as well as anticipated revenue sources. This year's budgeting process will be different than most, as the budget had to be updated to reflect COVID-19 related programs and costs, and our budget hearings will be held remotely. Nevertheless, I am hopeful that with the hard work of Mayor Siddiqui, the City Manager, Finance Committee Co-Chairs Councillor Simmons and Councillor Carlone, and the City's Finance Department, we will be able to approve a budget that works for all Cambridge residents. [Click here](#) to review the budget appropriation orders, or [click here](#) to view the hearing schedule for these budget hearings.

This item was referred to the Finance Committee.

II. CALENDAR

CHARTER RIGHT

1. 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.

CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED IN COUNCIL MAY 4, 2020

POR 2020 #102

This order, sponsored by Councillor Nolan, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, and Councillor Zondervan, originally asked the City Manager to align [the City's emergency order requiring the use of masks](#) with other public health guidance, and that the fine for noncompliance be eliminated. At our last City Council meeting, Councillor Zondervan exercised his charter right (no vote was taken, and it appears on the next City Council meeting agenda) to receive clarity on how [the Governor's emergency order](#) mandating the use of masks could affect Cambridge's emergency order. The City Solicitor determined that the two emergency orders are not in conflict with each other, so the City's emergency order, which has stricter guidelines to accommodate Cambridge's dense, urban environment, stays in place. This order was instead amended to strike out the request to align it with other public health guidance, and to ask the City Manager to create an appeals process for financial hardship for fines. Although the Cambridge Police Department has emphasized it's approach is education and mask distribution, not giving out fines, the possibility of a fine still serves as an important cautionary measure, encouraging compliance. The order also asks the City Manager to provide weekly updates on any fines issued and appeals requested, and to report the race, age, and gender of those fined. This way, we will be able to ensure no profiling occurs in the enforcement of our order, and that our community understands the seriousness of wearing masks or other face coverings in public. Masks protect both the wearer and those around them, and wearing face coverings is especially important in a densely populated city like Cambridge, where physical distancing is sometimes difficult.

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.

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TABLED ON MARCH 23, 2020

POR 2020 #50

No action was taken.

4. Policy Order Summer Camp Operations.

TABLED IN COUNCIL MAY 4, 2020

POR 2020 #103

This order, submitted by Councillor Simmons, asked the City Manager to determine whether summer camps and other youth programming will be able to occur this summer, and to create a contingency plan if they are not. This policy order was placed on the table (no action was taken, and it appears on every agenda until a Councillor requests it be discussed and voted on) at our last meeting to allow for further discussion. It was amended by substitution to provide more background information, to direct the City Manager to ensure additional funds are available if needed to address the needs of students and families, and to add Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor McGovern, and Councillor Nolan as co-sponsors. It was then further amended to correct a misspelling, and to explicitly ask the City Manager to determine if the Mayor's Summer Youth Program will be held. As we begin to consider what a reopening will look like, it is critical we know what services will be available for Cambridge's youth, both for their enrichment, and so their parents can plan for childcare, so I am thankful for the sponsors' efforts in supporting our families.

This order was adopted as amended.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. 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.

III. POLICY ORDER AND RESOLUTION LIST

1. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to order the Department of Public Works and any other relevant departments to consider implementing Simple Recycling's curbside textile recycling program and report back to the Council on this matter in a timely manner.

Councillor Toomey

POR 2020 #104

This order asks the City Manager to partner with Simple Recycling to create a curbside textile recycling program. Textiles make up a large portion of trash heading to landfills, and a program like this would help us salvage and reuse articles of clothing that can't be reworn or donated, so I am grateful for this and all of Councillor Toomey's efforts to help the City cut down on waste. This order was amended to include context information that [the 2019 Zero Waste Master Plan](#) includes a recommendation to create a textile recycling program.

This order was adopted as amended.

2. That the City Manager report to the council with an update on recommendations being discussed by the small business advisory group so the council may be prepared for quick action on items that may properly come before the body.

Councillor Nolan, Councillor Carlone, Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

POR 2020 #105

This order, sponsored by Councillor Nolan, Councillor Carlone, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler and myself, asks the City Manager to update the City Council on recommendations being considered by [the City's Small Business Advisory Group](#). This group was created by [a policy order](#) Councillor Simmons and I previously submitted, and is one of the essential ways we can help support our local, small businesses as they continue to feel the devastating effects of COVID-19. Made up of industry experts, including small business owners, neighborhood business association leaders, City staff, and more, this group offers valuable insight into what exactly our local business community needs from us to recover, so it is critical that the City Council stays updated on their recommendations. One idea currently being discussed is the possibility of using additional sidewalk space and adjacent parking spaces to open up more space for outdoor dining for restaurants. As we reopen our economy, our stores will likely operate at reduced capacity at first, so it is crucial that we maximize any opportunities to utilize existing space while ensuring worker and patron safety, and the accessibility of our streets. This policy order is just one of the many ways we are supporting our local, small businesses during these challenging times. [Click here](#) to learn more about our other efforts.

This order was adopted.

3. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the Department of Public Works and any other relevant City departments to reopen the Recycling Center for a limited time and to place recycling bins strategically across the City for residents who are unable to access the Recycling Center to allow for residents to recycle plastic items such as bags.

Councillor Toomey

POR 2020 #106

This order was adopted.

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4. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the Police Department to provide information to the City Council about social media protocols and what disciplinary action has been taken as result of the Department's social media use incident

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, Councillor Zondervan, Councillor Carlone

POR 2020 #107

This order asks the City Manager to provide information about any disciplinary action that was taken in response to a Police Officer posting an offensive tweet on the official Cambridge Police Department twitter account. It also requests a report on how the Police Department's social media protocols have been revised since this incident. As there is a legal question as to whether the City Council has the authority to request disciplinary records from a public officer, whether in a public meeting or in a private executive session, Councillor Simmons exercised her charter-right. This issue will be taken up again at next Monday night's meeting.

Councillor Simmons exercised her charter-right.

5. That the City Council go on record in solidarity with all Lesley University workers and in support of the demands of the community petition

Councillor Zondervan, Councillor Carlone, Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

POR 2020 #108

This order was adopted.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS FROM OTHER CITY OFFICERS

1. A communication was received from Mayor Siddiqui, transmitting information from the School Committee's Regular Meeting held on May 5, 2020.

COF 2020 #28

This communication from Mayor Siddiqui outlines the work the School Committee has been doing to support remote learning during COVID-19 and plan for the budget. The School Committee has been holding Special Meetings to get critical insight and community feedback, the next of which [will be held tonight](#), Tuesday, May 12th, at 6pm. I am thankful for the vigilance of Mayor Siddiqui and the entire School Committee for their efforts, and look forward to exploring new ways to uplift our students during these difficult times.

This item was placed on file.

2. A communication was received from Vice Mayor Mallon, transmitting Food Insecurity Work and Resources Update.

COF 2020 #29

I submitted this communication to provide an update on the food insecurity work being done throughout the City during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past several weeks, [Food For Free](#) has stepped up, helping coordinate the operation of [school meals distribution sites](#), and partnering with the City to create [the Cambridge Community Food Line](#), which delivers fresh produce and shelf-stable items to nearly 2,000 residents each week. The Community Food Line is currently operating at capacity, yet interest in its services grows every day. To ensure this program remains accessible for residents who specifically need delivery services, such as elderly or immuno-compromised residents, and that food insecure residents find sustainable, long-term relief, I teamed up with [Project Bread](#), UMass Boston, the [City's Department of Human Service Programs](#), and [the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee](#) to launch a targeted outreach campaign encouraging residents to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, commonly known as food stamps. Recognizing a unique opportunity to use contacts on existing food distribution lists, trained callers are offering these residents pre-screening services, helping them apply for SNAP, unemployment benefits, housing assistance, City-run relief programs, and much more. Callers are able to provide information and support in multiple languages, and follow-ups calls are scheduled to ensure residents received the benefits they applied for. By having trained callers who are knowledgeable about several different assistance programs available, we are connecting residents to the crucial, systemic resources they need to stay afloat during these difficult times, and are ensuring our existing programs remain accessible and sustainable long-term. [Click here](#) to read my full letter, or [click here](#) to read more about the pivotal role SNAP plays in communities nationwide.

This item was placed on file.