



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA • AUGUST 3, 2020

Special Meeting

Sullivan Chamber

2:00 PM

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

THE CITY COUNCIL WILL MEET IN A SPECIAL SESSION TO VOTE ON RELOCATION OF POLLING PLACES

I. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA

1. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to a report received from the Board of Election Commissioners requesting the City Council vote to temporarily relocate polling sites in response to COVID-19.

CMA 2020 #179

As part of a statewide effort to protect public health during the upcoming primary and general elections, the Election Commission has worked to relocate 14 of Cambridge's current 30 polling locations. These locations were identified as being too small for physical distancing, closed for renovations, or as belonging to high-risk groups, such as Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) senior buildings. The Election Commission found alternate, close-by locations for polling places being relocated ([click here](#) to find out if and where your polling location has moved), and requested City Council approval for relocation, as is required this soon to an election. In addition to social media outreach, mailers will be sent out notifying residents of the change, and signage with maps will redirect residents to the correct locations on voting days. A reverse 911 may also be used to inform voters of the change.

On voting days, polling locations will have complimentary masks and hand sanitizer, and the Election Commission is exploring the possibility of having a separate voting booth for residents who cannot wear face coverings for health reasons; per guidance from the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth, no voter will be turned away for not wearing a mask. Although no formal decisions have been made so far on reopening schools, the School Committee has cancelled school for November 3rd, to accommodate polling locations within school buildings, and protect the health of both students and school staff, as well as voters.

The Election Commission is also encouraging voters to vote by mail. Of the 71,000 registered voters in Cambridge, roughly 10,700 have already indicated the desire to either vote early or vote absentee, with more requests flooding in each day. The City has already ordered one ballot drop box, to be located at 51 Inman Street, but with growing concerns over delays with USPS, we should order additional drop boxes as soon as possible, as they take a while to be delivered. Having several more drop boxes at either manned locations like fire stations, or at CHA buildings, would allay concerns with the postal service, while making it as easy and as accessible as possible to vote in advance.

During discussion, Councillor Simmons made a motion to ask the City Manager to look into ordering additional drop boxes, into placing them at CHA buildings, and into suspending street cleaning on election days. However, Councillor Toomey exercised his charter-right (discussion ended, no vote was taken, and the motion will appear on the next City Council meeting agenda), expressing concerns about micromanaging the City Manager and Election Commission. While I'm sure the City Manager and Election Commission would have explored our ideas without a formal motion being made, formalizing our requests promotes accountability in City processes.

[Click here](#) to register to vote, learn about early voting and vote by mail, and more.

Relocation was approved.