



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA • AUGUST 10, 2020

Special Meeting

Sullivan Chamber

3:00 PM

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

THE CITY COUNCIL WILL MEET IN A SPECIAL SESSION TO RECEIVE A COVID-19 UPDATE FROM THE CITY MANAGER AND HIS STAFF

While the City Council isn't holding our regular meetings during the summer recess, Mayor Siddiqui called a special meeting to hear a COVID-19 update from City leadership.

Homelessness Update: The [temporary homeless shelter](#) located at the War Memorial Recreation Center will be moving to the east wing of Spaulding Hospital at 1575 Cambridge Street. After renovations are completed, the War Memorial Recreation Center, a part of the CRLS campus, will be returned to the School Department. The 57-bed shelter will continue to offer COVID-19 negative adults housing, day programming, healthcare, and more, at a cost of \$3 million to the City. A robust outreach campaign notifying abutters of the move will launch in the surrounding neighborhood soon, and will continue leading up to the shelter's projected relocation in November. Read more about the relocation [here](#). Offering housing is a crucial piece of safeguarding the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable members of our community, so I'm grateful to see the City is continuing to step up for our homeless neighbors.

Shared Streets Update: On Tuesday, August 4th, the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department (TPT) released their plans for a second phase of [the Shared Streets Pilot](#) during their [community webinar](#). This new phase will feature major network connections through East and North Cambridge, connecting these communities to major City destinations, like business squares and MBTA facilities. These streets were chosen using over 1,500 pieces of feedback collected by TPT. During the first phase of Shared Streets, TPT was consistently using feedback to make tweaks to improve the pilot, so having input from residents is a critical way we can ensure the second phase is a success as well. If you have questions, concerns, or comments, share your thoughts by using this [street changes map](#), emailing tpt@cambridgema.gov, or calling 617-349-4700. Opening up our streets to pedestrians and cyclists is one of the key ways we can ensure everyone has the space they need to physically distance and keep themselves safe during this pandemic, so I am excited to see the second phase roll out on August 17th, and I will continue working with City leaders to reimagine our roadways and public spaces.

Schools Update: At their [August 6th meeting](#), the School Committee voted to reopen Cambridge Public Schools in the fall with a staged approach (learn more about the reopening plan [here](#)). One topic they discussed was a motion from Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui, supported by Members Racheal Weinstein and

David Weinstein, on providing childcare for students with working parents who are unable to physically return to school. This motion was tabled due to time constraints, but childcare is an essential piece to any school reopening plan, and is becoming more and more critical as residents continue to return to work. That's why the City Council approved a policy order asking the City Manager to work with the Department of Human Service Programs, the Cambridge Public School District, the faith community, and community partners to explore childcare options. While the City Council and School Committee are holding a [roundtable discussion](#) tomorrow, August 11th, at 5:30 pm on school reopening plans, we can't vote at roundtables, so today's special meeting was the last opportunity to act before schools reopen. Exploring childcare options was also one of [the School Committee's contingencies](#) for approving Superintendent Salim's school reopening plan.

Testing Update: After urging from my colleagues and I on the City Council, the City is increasing the number of [COVID testing appointments](#) in August by 33%. Currently, appointment slots are being released each week, and testing is offered in North Cambridge on Wednesdays, and in the Port on Saturdays. To make an appointment, [click here](#) to book your slot, or call 617-665-3795. Any Cambridge resident over the age of eight is eligible to get tested, regardless of immigration, insurance, or symptomatic status.

500 tests are being administered by the City each week, and, in total, roughly 35,000 tests have been conducted in Cambridge since January. The Public Health Department is also working with the School Department on school reopening strategies, and is exploring the possibility of offering modular testing to teachers, and pool testing to students. As some university students will soon return to campus, the Public Health Department is collaborating with Harvard, MIT, and Lesley to protect returning students and faculty, as well as residents this upcoming school year. To learn more about universities' reopening plans, [click here](#) to tune into an Economic Development and University Relations Committee hearing I'll be chairing tomorrow, August 11th, at 10 am.

Public Health Update: Cambridge's current [COVID-19 case count](#) stands at 1,231 cases, and 99 deaths. As we continue to mourn those we have lost, the Public Health Department reports seeing three to four new cases per day, significantly lower than previous rates. Overall, Cambridge's COVID positivity rate stands at .8%, lower than Springfield's 2.74%, Worcester's 2.45%, Somerville and Lowell's 1%, Boston's 2%, and Chelsea's 5%, indicating the public health guidelines the City has implemented are helping keep our residents safe. Slightly more residents in the 20-39 age range are, however, testing positive for COVID-19 than previously, so it is critical to avoid large gatherings and remain vigilant on mask use, physical distancing, and proper hand hygiene.

The Public Health Department has deployed a 16 member [Cambridge Community Corps](#) to five neighborhoods to educate residents on public health guidelines in parks, tot lots, and basketball courts, and to answer any questions. Moving forward, the COVID-19 Expert Advisory Panel is tracking patterns across the Commonwealth and in the region, and will make adjustments accordingly. As we look ahead, the Public Health Department is exploring different ways to deliver flu vaccines, as the traditional fall flu clinic model would attract large gatherings, and therefore present a health hazard.