



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA NOVEMBER 30, 2020

Regular Meeting

Sullivan Chamber

5:30PM

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 a Covid-19 update.
CMA 2020 #269
City staff gave a COVID-19 update.

Small Business Update: This past Saturday was Small Business Saturday, kicking off the Shop Local season. Whether it be ordering from the [Cambridge Arts Creative Marketplace](#), checking out the [Popportunity Winter Market](#) at Starlight Square, or [finding a new favorite retailer](#) at a business square near you, there are so many ways to support our Main Street economy and help our small business community get back on its feet. [Click here](#) to learn more about how you can Shop Local this holiday season.

Homelessness Services Update: Since the City partnered with First Street Church earlier this fall to offer shower facilities in Harvard Square to homeless residents, Monday through Friday, 1pm-4pm, 10 to 15 people a day have been utilizing these facilities. The City is considering offering morning hours as well. The City's [emergency homeless shelter](#) is expected to relocate to Spaulding Hospital on December 16th, and the War Memorial Recreation Center on CRLS campus, where the shelter currently is, will soon after be returned to the School Department.

The City's Warming Center, located at the Senior Center, opened today, December 1st, at 7am, and will offer food and a warm place to stay to up to thirty homeless residents a day. At 5:30pm, the Warming Center will switch to an overnight shelter. The state, in conjunction with local non-profit Solutions At Work, is working on opening up their own homeless shelter at the New England School of English on Green Street, and City staff will conduct a walk-through of the site soon.

Open Space Update: Memorial Drive will remain closed to cars and Riverbend Park will be kept open for cyclists and pedestrians' use on Saturdays and Sundays through December 27th, from 10am-4pm. I am so excited that residents will have this additional space to safely distance and get outside, whether it be for exercise, fun, or getting to work. The City Manager noted that the closure date may be further extended at a later time.

City Services Update: In effort to protect our staff, the City will be reducing in-person appointments, and only offering them on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of the

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many [City services offered online](#). Administrative buildings will also be closed to staff on Fridays, and departments that are able are encouraged to reduce in-person staff back down to 25%.

Vaccine Update: With the recent, hopeful news of the first COVID vaccines being available as early as mid to late December, the Public Health Department is preparing for eventual mass distribution next year, and conducted a “practice run” at their December 14th drive-through flu clinic. Early on, vaccines will be very limited and healthcare workers indirectly or directly exposed to COVID will be prioritized. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health will also prioritize other high-risk groups based on state and CDC recommendations.

Testing Update: To date, 341, 107 tests have been administered to Cambridge residents since March 2nd, including 55,498 tests administered from November 8th through November 21st. The City’s free testing program has administered 33,560 tests since April, including more than 15,400 tests in November. To meet increasing demand, Cambridge started offering this free testing daily on November 9th, and additional sites were added on November 23rd and November 30th. [Click here](#) to learn more about getting tested, or [click here](#) to make your appointment. Overall, Cambridge has a [.72% positivity rate](#) from the past two weeks, classifying us as a “yellow,” moderate-risk community.

The Commonwealth recently issued new testing guidelines for nursing homes requiring that all staff be tested once a week. Previously, only 50% of staff had to be tested every two weeks. See Policy Order and Resolution List Item #3 for further discussion.

In Cambridge Public Schools, 5,628 tests have been administered to 1,004 staff members under the voluntary surveillance testing program. The average staff member has been tested 5.6 times under this program, which saw increasing participation each week until the Thanksgiving holiday last week. 59 students who developed symptoms during the school day have also been tested. Three metrics are used in order to determine if Cambridge Public Schools can allow in-person learning for certain, high-need scholars. Of these three metrics (must be fewer than 25 new confirmed cases per day as a 7-day average, less than 5% of COVID tests among Cambridge residents must be positive, and wastewater monitoring must show less than 100 copies of viral genomes per milliliter), two metrics would have to be above the designated threshold to require a complete shift to virtual learning. Currently, the wastewater surveillance metric is above it’s threshold, with 359.5 copies of viral genomes per milliliter, while the other two metrics remain below the threshold level.

Public Health Update: Cambridge’s [COVID case count](#) stands at a total of 2,186 cases, including 1,264 recoveries, 524 active cases, and 100 devastating deaths, a number that hasn’t increased in eight weeks. Our daily average incidence rate from the past week is 10.7 per 100,000 residents.

The Public Health Department is working on a number of efforts to curb COVID transmission as we, alongside the entire country, enter into a case surge. Cambridge Community Corps members will go door-to-door in North Cambridge, East Cambridge, the Port, and Cambridgeport to speak to residents about how and where to get tested, and will leave behind informational leaflets in multiple languages. The Public Health Department is also continuing to develop and share guidance on minimizing risk in social settings throughout the holiday season, and is using wastewater surveillance data to track and detect rates of COVID in our community. [Click here](#) to see the Public Health Department’s entire presentation.

This item was placed on file.

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2. Transmitting Communication from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of \$1,250,000 from Free Cash to the Public Investment Fund Emergency Communications Extraordinary Expense account which will be used for site maintenance and the replacement of critical infrastructure to support the City of Cambridge radio system.

CMA 2020 #270

This item was adopted.

3. Transmitting Communication from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to two appropriations totalling \$9,500,000 related to the Foundry as follows: \$6 million from Free Cash to the Public Investment Fund Department of Public Works Extraordinary Expenditures Account; and \$3.5 million from the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority to the Public Investment Fund Department of Public Works Extraordinary Expenditures Account.

CMA 2020 #271

This appropriation will cover additional, unexpected costs associated with construction at the Foundry. The Foundry Building was originally constructed in 1890 as part of an industrial steam complex before the City received the building as part of a rezoning petition mitigation package. Now, in partnership with the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, the City is redeveloping the building into a space for the Arts, entrepreneurship, technology, and workforce education. Learn more about the Foundry project [here](#), or to read the City Manager's full appropriation request [here](#).

This item was adopted.

4. Transmitting Communication from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of \$450,000 from Free Cash to the General Fund Law Department Other Ordinary Maintenance account which will be used to cover unanticipated increases in costs relating to legal matters handled by outside counsel legal services, stenographers and court reporters, constable services, consultants and experts, as well as filing fees and related costs in matters pending in courts and/or administrative bodies.

CMA 2020 #272

This appropriation of \$450,000 to the Law Department would constitute a 15% increase to that department's budget, a large, unexpected increase from the cost of using outside counsel and legal professionals. As the City Solicitor explained during discussion, the Law Department sometimes needs help with complicated, drawn-out cases, specialized assistance from experts, or representation when the City is a defendant.

This item was adopted.

II. CALENDAR

CHARTER RIGHT

1. A communication was received from John W. Parsons, Esq., Executive Director, PERAC, regarding required Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriation.

**CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY COUNCILLOR CARLONE
IN COUNCIL NOVEMBER 23, 2020
COM 772 #2020**

At last week's meeting, Councillor Carlone exercised his charter-right (discussion ends, no vote is taken, and it appears on the next agenda) on this communication to hear from City staff and get a better understanding of it. [This communication](#) from the Executive Director of state Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC), outlines the amount to be appropriated for the City's retirement system, to be approved by the City Council for the 2022 Fiscal Year during budget discussions next spring. Every two years, the City has to update a pension actuarial study, and produces a report based on that study to give to PERAC. PERAC then uses that study to determine the amount of money that needs to be allocated for the retirement system.

This communication was placed on file.

2. That the City Council formally go on record in asking the City Manager to work with the appropriate City Staff in formulating an RFP for a public arts project that will acknowledge the unfinished work of the 19th Amendment, the importance of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and how the two pieces of legislation ultimately complemented one another in helping to shape a more perfect union, and that the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner.

**CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY COUNCILLOR NOLAN
IN COUNCIL NOVEMBER 23, 2020
POR 2020 #273**

Last week, Councillor Simmons, Mayor Siddiqui, and I filed this policy order asking that a piece of public art be commissioned to acknowledge and celebrate the role that women of color played in the suffrage movement. This piece of art is meant to complement [the 19th Amendment Centennial Public Art Project](#). During last week's discussion, Councillor Nolan was added as a co-sponsor, and then she exercised her charter-right in order to offer minor amendments to the policy order this week. Councillor Simmons offered further amendments to Councillor Nolan's amendments, and this order was ultimately amended to acknowledge that men of color were also denied suffrage in much of the country until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and that many groups of women, in addition to women of color, did not get the right to vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

This order was adopted as amended.

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3. Policy Order to strengthen community bonds and ensure equitable access to neighborhood organizations.

**CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY COUNCILLOR NOLAN
IN COUNCIL NOVEMBER 23, 2020
POR 2020 #275**

This policy order, filed by Councillors McGovern, Simmons, Nolan, and I, was offered last week to both condemn an incident of homophobic bullying by a board member of a local neighborhood group as well as call a meeting of the Neighborhood and Long Term planning committee “to discuss ways to strengthen community bonds and ensure equitable access to neighborhood organizations.” Some examples of that support could be providing City support on creating rules and regulations that ensure greater diversity and representation on boards and in membership of these groups, helping to create formal codes of conduct to ensure that these groups create safe and supportive environments for all participants, and developing policies and practices to allow members of neighborhood organizations to formally file complaints and grievances and seek assistance from the City when discriminatory incidents take place. Last week, Councillor Nolan exercised her charter right, and offered up amendments this week to separate the two key points of the order, condemning the homophobic comments made, and opening up a dialogue on how the City can support neighborhood groups create more equitable recruitment, outreach, and engagement opportunities.

Cambridge is home to many community and neighborhood groups that play a crucial role in policy-making, but their memberships struggle to represent the diverse demographics of their neighborhood, often lacking people of color and renters especially. This has created a system where participation is a function of privilege, but it shouldn't be. We need diverse voices in order to hear every perspective. After hearing this week and last week from several residents that they've felt unwelcome or even unsafe participating in their respective neighborhood groups, it's clear there's a lot of work to be done. We can't just say that we value diversity, we have to actually fight for it, and I look forward to continuing this conversation in the Neighborhood and Long Term Planning Committee, supporting neighborhood groups who would like to be more inclusive and exploring new ways to increase participation.

This order was adopted as amended.

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.

5. The City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the City of Cambridge Law Department to review the above changes to the language of the Domestic Partnerships Ordinance and report back to the Council.

**PASSED TO A SECOND READING IN COUNCIL JULY 27, 2020.
TO BE ORDAINED ON OR AFTER SEPTEMBER 14, 2020
POR 2020 #180**

No action was taken.

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6. That the enclosed amendments to the Tree Protection Ordinance be adopted to extend the temporary prohibition on tree cutting permits until February 28, 2021.

PASSED TO A SECOND READING IN COUNCIL NOVEMBER 16, 2020

TO BE ORDAINED ON OR AFTER NOVEMBER 30, 2020

POR 2020 #264

This item asks that [the Tree Protection Ordinance](#) be amended to expire on February 28th, 2021, rather than its original expiration date of December 31st, 2020. The Health and Environment Committee has held two hearings to discuss potential changes to the Tree Protection Ordinance, and the City Council is expecting to receive draft language from the Department of Public Works soon. By extending the expiration date, we'll have time to examine that language and make adjustments before this Ordinance expires.

This item was ordained.

III. POLICY ORDER AND RESOLUTION LIST

1. That City Manager be and hereby is requested to implement a program similar to the patio heater reimbursement program for purchasing air sanitizers that meet or exceed the above specifications for Cambridge businesses

Councillor Toomey, Councillor Simmons, Councillor McGovern

POR 2020 #278

This policy order asks the City Manager to create an air purifiers reimbursement program for our local restaurants, similar to [the Patio Heater Reimbursement Program](#) that I advocated for. During a [Special City Council Meeting](#) that Mayor Siddiqui hosted on November 23rd, some public health professionals explained that some other municipalities use air purifiers to make indoor activities safer. This order was amended to make minor clarifications in its language.

This order was adopted as amended.

2. Council Opposition to Comcast Data Cap

Councillor Zondervan, Councillor Nolan, Councillor McGovern, Mayor Siddiqui

POR 2020 #279

This order was adopted on the consent agenda (no discussion).

3. Expanding Testing in Nursing Homes PO

Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Toomey, Councillor Simmons, Mayor Siddiqui

POR 2020 #280

Our older, highly susceptible nursing home residents were hit especially hard during the early days of the pandemic, and as we enter a new COVID surge, [we've already seen a few new cases pop up in our local nursing homes](#). The Commonwealth had a surveillance testing program that required [only 50% of staff members to be tested every two weeks](#), and with so much at risk, I filed this order with Councillor Toomey, Councillor Simmons, and Mayor Siddiqui to ask the City to step in and offer more regular testing to all nursing home staff to help protect these vulnerable community members. However, the state issued new guidelines mandating that all staff be tested each week. I'm glad to see the state step up in this critical way, and as these new guidelines made the policy order redundant, I withdrew it.

This order was withdrawn.

4. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to present the City Council with a comprehensive data report on a weekly basis, for the duration of the pandemic emergency, including (but not limited to) regional and Cambridge-specific trends.

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

POR 2020 #281

This order asks the City Manager to provide the City Council with a weekly data report including regional and Cambridge-specific trends during each week's City Council meeting. Currently, we're often given 14-day averages calculated a week or more before the meeting that data is presented at, but we need the latest, most accurate information to make data-based policy-making. Providing the City Council with the prior Thursday's Expert Advisory Panel's meeting notes during our Monday night meetings is another way we can stay informed on the latest data.

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This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

5. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with relevant departments to implement comprehensive contact tracing in Cambridge including the ability to conduct backwards contact tracing facilitated with technology such as the use of QR codes, and to report back to the City Council on this matter as soon as possible.

Councillor Zondervan, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

POR 2020 #282

This order asks the City Manager to create a comprehensive contact tracing program, with an emphasis on backwards contact tracing through the use of technology, like QR codes. By conducting backwards contact tracing, public health experts identify transmission clusters by tracking all of the places a COVID-positive resident was, and contacting other residents who were at the same place in the same timeframe. Until we have a vaccine, contact tracing is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent further transmission, as it helps identify more individuals who should quarantine and get tested. Using QR codes or a similar technology would allow residents to quickly, easily “check in” and log that they were at a business, so that they could be contacted if a cluster forms.

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

6. That the City Manager confer with the Cambridge Department of Public Health on the feasibility of launching mobile COVID-19 testing vans in December and report back to the City Council as soon as possible.

Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Zondervan, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

POR 2020 #283

This policy order asks the City to launch mobile COVID testing vans to expand access to testing and ensure no neighborhood has a disproportionately low testing rate. Other municipalities across the country have already deployed testing vans, and while I’m grateful that Cambridge expanded our free testing program to offer tests seven days a week, there is always more work to be done in ensuring our residents get the care they need, preventing further transmission, and collecting data to understand COVID’s impact on our community.

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. The Ordinance Committee met on November 12, 2020 to conduct a public hearing on the PUD-CDK District Zoning Amendment.

This report was accepted and placed on file.

A Zoning Petition Has been received from BMR–Third LLC c/o BioMed Realty, L.P. regarding a Zoning Amendment Petition for a new Planned Unit Development PUD District CDK

APP 2020 #34

Nearly a year and a half ago, Eversource announced plans to build an energy substation at 135 Fulkerson Street, across the Street from the Kennedy-Longfellow Elementary School, near Linden Park, and in a residential neighborhood. City leadership, the neighborhood, and local businesses emphasized the need to move the planned substation to an alternative site. This zoning amendment would allow Eversource to instead build the substation underground where the Blue Street Garage, owned by Boston Properties, currently sits. The City Council previously discussed this petition at our [November 12th, 2020 Ordinance Committee hearing](#). This petition was amended to include recommendations given to the petitioners by the Planning Board at a [November 10th Planning Board hearing](#).

This petition was passed to a second reading as amended.

V. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS FROM OTHER CITY OFFICERS

1. A communication was received from Mayor Siddiqui, communicating information from the School Committee.

COF 2020 #75

This communication outlines the work Mayor Siddiqui and the School Committee are doing to support CPS scholars, educators, and staff. [Click here](#) to read her full update.

This communication was placed on file.