



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA • JANUARY 4, 2021

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 2021 #1

City staff gave a COVID update.

Homeless Services Update: The state run shelter at 1115 Green Street began intake on January 1st, 2021, while the [Transition Wellness Center](#) is averaging forty guests per night. Several rounds of testing are being conducted there, and if a guest tests positive, they are transported to the regional wellness center. Guests of [the City's temporary emergency homeless shelter](#) have been relocated to the new site at Spaulding Hospital, and the War Memorial Recreation Center has been returned to the School Department. The City is continuing its [shelter meals program](#) into 2021, which, so far, has provided over 118,000 meals to shelters and day programs, while infusing \$850,000 into our local restaurant business community.

City Services Update: The City extended its [prohibition on City-sponsored events and event permitting in parks](#) through March 31st, 2021. As there has been an uptick in cases among City employees, in-person appointments at City buildings are suspended until at least January 18th. While most City services can be accessed online or over the phone, the suspension of contactless library pickups will be devastating, especially for our youngest residents who can't access school libraries for enriching reading materials. The library is a lifeline for our residents, and it's a troubling juxtaposition that we're discussing reopening schools while libraries aren't open even for contactless pick ups.

Small Business Update: On December 26th, 2020, Cambridge [rolled back to a modified Phase 2, Step 2](#), to be continued until January 16th, 2021 at least. Under these restrictions, certain businesses were required to close, while others were allowed to remain open with modifications. The deadline to apply for [Cambridge's Small Business Winter COVID-19 Grant Program](#) is coming up on January 8th. The City has already received over 160 eligible applications, and the Community Development Department is reaching out to businesses who haven't yet applied.

Arts Update: The Cambridge Community Foundation and the City [have awarded \\$257,500 to local arts and culture organizations](#) through the Cultural Capital Fund that Mayor Siddiqui and I advocated for for months. As the first to close and last to reopen, the Arts sector has been hit especially hard by

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF JANUARY 4, 2021

the pandemic, and as they have lifted our spirits when we've needed them most these past several months, I'm so grateful to see this critical support for them.

CPS Update: Two of the three metrics determining school closures are still above threshold. The Commonwealth has extended the deadline for in-person learners across the state to receive a flu shot through the end of February.

Vaccine Update: Healthcare workers, nursing home residents, and nursing home staff began receiving the COVID vaccine last week. Next week, the Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) will begin working with ProEMS to vaccinate first responders. CPHD is awaiting guidance from the state on vaccinating non-COVID facing healthcare workers, and is developing a vaccine communications strategy to enhance public trust in the vaccine, especially within communities of color and older adults. These messages will be sent through different communication channels, including community forums, social media, and a door-to-door campaign, to reach as many residents as possible before the general public begins receiving vaccinations in April. The City has created a Vaccine Task Force to work on community messaging and education through the fall. As the Baker-Polito administration recently announced that elderly residents will be given an even higher priority for vaccination, and given that three of the ten recent deaths we've had in our community have come from low-income senior housing buildings, I hope CPHD will work closely with the Cambridge Housing Authority to create on-site vaccination clinics when the time comes, to ensure it's as easy and as safe as possible for these vulnerable residents to get vaccinated. For a FAQs list on the vaccine, [click here](#).

Testing Update: The City is continuing to offer free, daily testing to residents. [Click here](#) for more information, or [click here](#) to make an appointment to get tested. You don't currently need an appointment to get tested, but as our sites are seeing increasingly longer lines, with more non-residents coming, the City is revisiting that requirement. As demand for testing continues to increase, the City has moved its testing location in the Port from the Pisani Center to the Christian Life Center, located at 85 Bishop Richard Allen Drive, which is a larger space. The City is also increasing testing capacity, and provided 2,741 tests on January 2nd and January 3rd alone. On December 26th, 2020, the Cambridge Community Corps conducted door-to-door outreach in the Wellington-Harrington neighborhood to encourage residents to get tested, leaving informational materials in multiple languages. Corps members will be redeployed to support COVID testing sites as demand continues to increase.

Public Health Update: Cambridge's [COVID case count](#) currently stands at 3,341 cases, including a devastating 111 deaths as of 1/5. After going several weeks without a fatality, ten residents sadly passed away due to COVID in December. Overall, 19.7% of cases are currently active, while there is an average of 25.7 cases per 100,000 residents, for a positivity rate of 1.32%. Cambridge remains a "yellow," moderate-risk community, but our case numbers will likely grow higher, as they have consistently done since before Thanksgiving. Moving forward, CPHD is keeping an eye on hospital capacity, deaths among elderly residents, and neighborhood trends.

[Click here](#) for the Public Health Department's full presentation.

This item was placed on file.

2. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the biennial City of Cambridge Resident Telephone Survey for 2020.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF JANUARY 4, 2021

CMA 2021 #2

This communication contains the results for the 2020 Cambridge Resident Telephone Survey, which is conducted every two years, along with responses gathered from an online version of the survey. These results offer valuable insight from residents on where the City needs to improve, and what our goals for the future should be, so Mayor Siddiqui plans to schedule a roundtable discussion for the City Council to have a larger conversation on this. In the meantime, I hope Polity Research Consulting, the contractor who conducted the survey, can provide us with residents' verbatim responses, as well as more information on the resident's demographics. In the overview of results ([click here for them](#)), it seems like the wealthier neighborhoods rank City government more highly than others, so breaking down the residents by income groups could provide meaningful insight into whether the City is reaching lower-income residents as well as their higher-income counterparts.

This item was placed on file.

3. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to a Zoning Petition which amends Article 8.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.

CMA 2021 #3

This communication contains a zoning amendment petition that would allow owners of pre-existing nonconforming single and two-family homes to only obtain a special permit, rather than a variance, for an alteration or addition of their home that would only increase the nonconformity, and not create a new conformity. For example, if a single family home is nonconforming because it exceeds the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and the owner plans an addition that will further exceed the FAR but not create a new nonconformity, they only need a special permit, which is easier to get than a variance. This zoning amendment would bring the City into compliance with a recent ruling from the Supreme Judicial Court, and is being sent to the Ordinance Committee and the Planning Board for further discussion, as all zoning petitions are.

This item was referred to the Ordinance Committee and the Planning Board for hearing and report.

4. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to Awaiting Report Item Number 20-72, regarding keeping Riverbend Park opened beyond December 27, 2020.

CMA 2021 #4

This communication announces that weekend closures of Memorial Drive will not continue in 2021, and that the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), which owns and operates Memorial Drive and Riverbend Park, will not expand the road closure into East Cambridge. During discussion, the City Manager noted that it isn't a financial issue, but rather a staffing issue for DCR, and since the road is state-owned, it isn't feasible for the City to step in and provide staff for it. With cases surging, it is especially critical that we have safe space outside for our residents to get around, exercise, and relax, to promote both mental and physical health, so this was difficult news to get. The City Manager advised that DCR may be interested in starting the closures earlier in the Spring than in typical years, and we will continue to advocate for that.

This item was placed on file.

II. CALENDAR

CHARTER RIGHT

1. Policy Order re Covid-19 Vaccines.

**CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY COUNCILLOR ZONDERVAN
IN COUNCIL DECEMBER 21, 2020
POR 2020 #293**

This policy order originally asked the City Manager to confer with the Public Health Department to ensure only vaccines with an effectiveness rate of 90% or higher are used in Cambridge, to promote public trust in the vaccine, particularly in communities of color. Last week, Councillor Zondervan exercised his charter-right (discussion ended, no vote was taken, and it appears on the next week's agenda) on this policy order, as he was concerned that the order was too broad and could play into existing fear around the vaccine, rather than alleviate it. During discussion, Councillor Simmons addressed some of his concerns by amending the policy order to remove references to a specific vaccine in trials that has less than a 90% effectiveness rate. The order was further amended to ask the City Manager and the Public Health Department to work to ensure only the vaccines with the highest effectiveness rates are used in Cambridge, without noting a specific 90% threshold.

This order was adopted as amended.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. That Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.150 of the Cambridge Municipal Code, entitled "Definitions for Article III" be amended.

**PASSED TO A SECOND READING IN COUNCIL DECEMBER 21, 2020
POR 2020 #297**

No action was taken.

III. POLICY ORDER AND RESOLUTION LIST

1. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the Law Department to draft Home Rule Petition language for a Fire Cadet Program similar to the language used in the Police Department Home Rule Petition.

Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor McGovern, Councillor Toomey, Councillor Simmons

POR 2021 #1

I filed this policy order with Councillors McGovern, Toomey, and Simmons to ask the City Solicitor to draft Home Rule Petition language to establish a Fire Cadet Program, which is highly anticipated by leaders in the Fire Department. In October 2019, I sponsored a similar policy order which received unanimous support, but no progress has been made towards drafting that language. This Fire Cadet Program would be modeled after the Police Cadet Program, which offers a meaningful civil service opportunity, has increased diversity within the Police Department, and provides an alternative pathway for residents to have a good job without needing a college degree. The State Legislature recently granted Boston's Home Rule Petition, allowing them to create a Fire Cadet Program, so I'm hoping the City can go along with the building momentum, and quickly draft language so we can submit a Home Rule Petition soon.

This order was adopted.

2. That the Executive Assistant to the City Council confer with the Dedication Committee to consider the request from Councillor Toomey for a street corner dedication in the vicinity of the corner of Carlisle Street and Prospect Street in honor of the late Neil Tobin.

Councillor Toomey

POR 2021 #2

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

3. Joining Next Century Cities

Councillor Nolan, Councillor Zondervan

POR 2021 #3

This order asks the City Council to go on record as interested in joining Next Century Cities (NCC). NCC currently serves over 200 municipalities interested in digital equity and accessible broadband by providing resources and support. This pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated the pre-existing inequities and resource gaps that ran deep through Cambridge pre-COVID, especially around internet access, and as we wait for the City Manager's plan to explore municipal broadband further, it's critical that we have every tool in our disposal to promote digital equity.

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

4. School Metrics

Councillor Nolan, Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor McGovern, Councillor Simmons

POR 2021 #4

This order has the City Council go on record supporting the School Committee in aligning schools' reopenings and closures with the ["Schools and Path to Zero Framework."](#) Extended school closures have had devastating impacts on our scholars, especially now that every student is learning remotely,

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF JANUARY 4, 2021

while working parents struggle to do their jobs while supporting their children's education. I have seen the teachers and staff give 200% each and every day since March, and I have seen our students struggle with mental health issues, lack of wifi and access to meals, as well as social isolation. This is a complicated issue, balancing the health of our staff and students with the need for in person learning. This framework, which will be discussed at the January 5th School Committee Meeting, offers recommendations for a staggered reopening, enhanced public health protocols, and an emphasis on tying school opening and closings to in school transmission rather than community cases. While the City Council doesn't have any control over the School Committee or the School Department, when so much is at stake of our learners, it's critical we show our support for returning students back to school as soon as it is safe for them, and the dedicated and talented CPSD staff, to do so.

This order was adopted on the consent agenda.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. The Economic Development & University Relations Committee met on November 19, 2020 to discuss challenges and opportunities that exist in City purchasing, procurement and programs for MWBEs and other historically disadvantaged businesses and non-profits in Cambridge.

This report was accepted and placed on file. [Click here](#) for more on the November 19th Economic Development & University Relations Committee hearing.

- A. That the City Manager, City Solicitor, and Purchasing Department confer to provide a report on the possible implementation of a sheltered market program here in Cambridge.

POR 2021 #5

Vice Mayor Mallon

I introduced this policy order during our committee discussion to ask City leadership to discuss the possibility of implementing a sheltered market program, which would allow the City to set aside a contract or a type of contract for historically disadvantaged vendors. This is just one meaningful way the City could uplift our local small businesses owned by minorities, women, and other underserved groups that are bearing the brunt of COVID's impacts, and who are underrepresented in City contracting.

This order was adopted.

2. The Public Safety Committee met on July 7, 2020 to conduct a public hearing on the Surveillance Technology Impact Reports and annual reports on ShotSpotter, BRIC, and COPLINK, and other outstanding surveillance annual reports

This report was accepted and placed on file. [Click here](#) for more on the July 7th Public Safety Committee Hearing, or [click here](#) for more on a related Public Safety Committee meeting on CPD's inventory list scheduled for January 6th, 2021.