



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA • APRIL 5, 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 vaccination rollout.

CMA 2021 #61

City staff gave a COVID update.

Open Space Update: [Memorial Drive will be closing](#) for cars and opening up for pedestrians and cyclists on Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 7pm starting on Saturday, April 10th through the end of November. These closures were a lifeline for our residents last year, helping them enjoy the outdoors, exercise, and travel safely, so I'm grateful to see that they'll be continuing this year. However, I was disheartened to hear that there aren't currently any plans to reinstate the Shared Streets Program, which was an invaluable resource for residents last year by offering extra open space to practice physical distancing.

Schools Update: 21,538 tests have been administered to 1,463 CPS staff members since October 2020 as part of the School Department's voluntary testing program. An additional 4,185 tests have been administered to 1,266 symptomatic students and student athletes, and to date, 54 positive cases have been identified through this program. CPHD is continuing to conduct pool testing among CPS students, and Mayor Siddiqui is leading conversations and forums with CPS caregivers on the vaccine.

Vaccine Update: On Monday, March 5th, residents aged 55+ and those with 1 certain medical condition became eligible for the vaccine. Eligible conditions now include Type 1 Diabetes, HIV, Substance Abuse Disorder, and being overweight. [Click here](#) to pre-register to receive the vaccine at a mass-vaccination site, or [click here](#) to find other appointments. The general public aged 16+ will become eligible on April 19th, and Pfizer expects to have the vaccine ready for youth aged 12-15 by this summer. Kids aged 5-11 will likely be vaccinated in early 2022, and younger children will follow them. 28% of Cambridge residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine, while 17% are fully vaccinated. Vaccine uptake rates among black and Latinx residents is slightly higher in Cambridge than in the state. The Commonwealth is receiving an increased vaccine supply from the federal government.

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The Cambridge Pandemic Collaborative has administered at least one dose to 2,672 individuals at City-run clinics, and is continuing to vaccinate residents onsite at CHA senior and disabled housing. Over 100 eligible residents have been identified for [the Homebound Vaccination Homebound](#), which begins today, Tuesday, April 16th. CPHD has also received 300 doses to address COVID in high-risk neighborhoods, and will begin vaccinating residents in North Cambridge before moving onto other areas. As CPHD continues with their multi-pronged communication campaign on the vaccine, I hope we can develop some creative ways to reach especially vulnerable communities. While City-run clinics don't ask for ID, undocumented residents would feel more secure if guidance was issued on different requirements for different vaccination sites, while CPHD could potentially partner with local service providers to run a mobile clinic to administer the single-shot J&J vaccine to unhoused, unsheltered residents.

Testing Update: The City is continuing to offer [free, daily COVID testing](#). Appointments are encouraged, but not required, and you can make yours [by clicking here](#) or calling 617-349-9788. Nearly 23,000 tests were administered in the month of March through this program, representing a slight decline since an all-time high testing demand in January. CPHD shared that [two at-home rapid tests](#) were recently approved by the FDA, but they likely won't be available on the market for a few weeks.

Public Health Update: Cambridge's [COVID case count](#) currently stands at 5,649 cases, including 121 devastating deaths. 959, or 16%, of these cases are active. With a .56% positivity rate and 17.3 daily confirmed cases per 100,000 residents, COVID infections are steadily rising in Cambridge, and across the Commonwealth. CPHD is continuing to conduct contact tracing, and reports that this increase is likely connected to unmasked activities, such as indoor dining and close contact between different households, travel, and COVID variants. Most of these new infections are occurring in residents aged 0-19 and 20-29, and CPHD warns residents to stay vigilant on mask use, physical distancing, and good hand hygiene.

[Click here](#) for CPHD's full presentation.

This item was placed on file.

2. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the reappointment of Charles J. Marquardt as an Election Commissioner for a four-year term, effective April 1, 2021.

CMA 2021 #62

[Click here](#) to learn more about this appointee.

This item was placed on file on the consent agenda.

3. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the appointment of the following person as a member of the Community Preservation Act Committee for a term of five years, effective April 5, 2021: Owen O'Riordan and Mary Flynn.

CMA 2021 #63

[Click here](#) for more information of the appointee's qualifications.

This item was placed on file on the consent agenda.

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4. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the appointment of the following person as a new Associate Member of the Board of Zoning Appeal for a term of 5-years, effective April 5, 2021: Wendy Leiserson

CMA 2021 #64

A 2019 survey conducted among members of Cambridge's boards and commissions confirmed what we all anecdotally knew to be true: that the City's boards and commissions are disproportionately white, older, and coming from more affluent neighborhoods. Although some progress has been made since these survey results were released, there's still a disconnect between the diversity of our residents, and the diversity of our boards and commissions. We need a broad spectrum of representation, and the only way to achieve that is reforming these structures by making the recruitment process more accessible, offering childcare, technological, or financial support to members, and ensuring remote participation remains a permanent option. I symbolically voted against this communication. This isn't a reflection of Ms. Leiserson's candidacy, who is [highly-qualified](#) and I am grateful to her for being willing to step up to serve her community, but rather a recognition of a broader problem with diversity in City boards and commissions, especially ones that hold substantial power, like the BZA. The BZA is made up of 10 residents, and currently only one person of color is serving on the board. As the BZA makes critical decisions about zoning and affordable housing, it is incumbent on us as a City that we ensure that the BZA is as diverse as Cambridge is.

This item was placed on file.

5. Transmitting Communication from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of \$130,000 from Free Cash to the Public Investment Fund Electrical Extraordinary Expenditures account which will fund the purchase of a new aerial bucket truck.

CMA 2021 #65

As she had some unanswered questions, Councillor Nolan exercised her charter-right (discussion ended, no vote was taken, and it will appear on next week's agenda).

Councillor Nolan exercised her charter-right.

6. Transmitting Communication from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of \$750,000.00 from Free Cash to the Public Investment Fund Department of Human Services Programs Extraordinary Expenditures account, to provide necessary funds to implement repairs to the 3 swimming pools located at the War Memorial Pool Facility.

CMA 2021 #66

This item asks the City Council to approve an appropriation of \$750,000 to repair significant issues in the three swimming pools at the War Memorial Recreation Center, located on the CRLS campus. These repairs will be completed this summer, to avoid disruptions to students.

This item was adopted.

7. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to a Planning Board recommendation to adopt with comments for further consideration, Article 8.000 Nonconformity Zoning Petition.

CMA 2021 #67

[Click here](#) to read the Planning Board's recommendations, or see Calendar Item #3 for further discussion.

This item was referred to the petition.

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8. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to a Planning Board recommendation to adopt both the Retail Uses Zoning Petition and the Home Occupations Zoning Petition, with comments for further consideration.

CMA 2021 #68

[This communication](#) contains a favorable recommendation from the Planning Board on both [the Retail Uses Zoning Petition and the Home Occupations Zoning Petition](#). By clarifying the definitions of certain uses, expanding or creating new uses to reflect the changing face of retail, and removing onerous requirements, updating the table of land use is a critical way the City can reduce the burden of starting or expanding a small business in Cambridge. I re-filed this petition with Mayor Siddiqui earlier this year, after the petition expired when an Ordinance Committee hearing on it had to be canceled due to inclement weather. Updating the Retail Table of Land Use has been a long, labor-intensive process, and now that the struggles of our small business community have been exacerbated by this public health crisis, I hope this petition can be swiftly amended to incorporate the Planning Board's recommendations. The Ordinance Committee will convene a hearing on this petition on Wednesday, April 14th at 5:30pm. [Click here](#) to watch the meeting. Sign up to give public comment at the meeting [by clicking here](#), or submit written testimony by emailing citycouncil@cambridgema.gov and cc'ing clerk@cambridgema.gov.

This item was referred to the petition.

II. CALENDAR

ON THE TABLE

1. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to Awaiting Report Item Number 20-64, requesting Home Rule language to allow for acoustic live entertainment performances in small businesses under certain conditions without a license.
TABLED IN COUNCIL FEBRUARY 22, 2021
CMA 2021 #32
No action was taken.

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. A communication transmitted from Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager, relative to a Zoning Petition which amends Article 8.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.
PASSED TO A SECOND READING IN COUNCIL MARCH 22, 2021 TO BE ADOPTED ON OR AFTER APRIL 5, 2021
CMA 2021 #3
[This zoning petition](#) would bring our Zoning Ordinance into compliance with a court ruling. This 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 item was ordained.

III. POLICY ORDER AND RESOLUTION LIST

1. That the Housing Committee be and hereby is requested to schedule a hearing to discuss the Housing Choice Law and its potential implications for housing projects in Cambridge with representatives from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, and community housing organizations
Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Simmons, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler
POR 2021 #63

I submitted this policy order with Councillors Simmons and Sobrinho-Wheeler to call for a Housing Committee meeting to discuss the new [“Housing Choice Law”](#) that was implemented earlier this year. This law issued several key reforms, including a statewide change to zoning laws that allow local officials to approve zoning changes with a simple majority, rather than a 2/3 supermajority. Our affordable housing crisis has only been exacerbated by this pandemic, and as zoning is one of the most powerful tools municipal officials have to enact change, we must examine how this law could impact affordable housing projects in our community. Mayor Siddiqui was added as a co-sponsor

This order was adopted as amended.

2. That the City Council amend the Article 22 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge entitled “SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT” to insert a new section 22.24.4
Councillor Zondervan, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, Councillor Carlone
POR 2021 #64

This order contains potential amendments to the City’s Zoning Ordinance that would require developers to pay into a City mitigation fund, with payments scaled by how much carbon a building emits over its lifetime. Generated revenue would then be used to fund green jobs development programs, renewable energy infrastructure, and more. This ambitious proposal has a lot of potential, but there seems to be a discrepancy on what residential buildings and projects, if any, would be subject to this ordinance. These amendments are being forwarded to the Planning Board and the Ordinance Committee, where I look forward to discussing this proposal further with my colleagues on the City Council, and hearing from community members. [Click here](#) to read the full proposed amendment. Councillor Nolan was added as a co-sponsor

This order was referred to the Ordinance Committee and the Planning Board as amended for hearing and report.

3. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the Director of the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department on traffic-calming solutions, such as speed bumps to be implemented in this area and report back to the City Council
Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Nolan, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler
POR 2021 #65

Mayor Siddiqui and I filed this order with Councillor Nolan and Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler to ask for traffic-calming solutions near the intersection of Fairfield Street and Pemberton Street. With many local preschools nearby, and with many children using these streets to get to Bergin Park and Peabody Elementary School, it’s crucial that we implement traffic-calming measures to ensure the safety of our vulnerable road users.

This order was adopted.

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4. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to light up City Hall blue for Autism Acceptance Month from April 12-16, 2021

Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor McGovern

POR 2021 #66

Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor McGovern, and I sponsored this order to ask the City Council to declare April as Autism Acceptance Month. More than 3.5 million Americans are living with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and making this designation helps express solidarity with this community, and encourages continued work towards creating enhanced services and opportunities for those on the spectrum. This order was amended to ask the City Manager to light City Hall up in red, rather than blue, and incorporate language adjustments to acknowledge [input from autism activists](#). Councillor Simmons was added as a co-sponsor.

This order was adopted as amended.

5. That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the appropriate City staff to ensure that all the information on the City's list of neighborhood organizations be updated, that a specific staffer be tasked with ensuring that the information is updated on an annual basis, and that the City Manager be and is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner.

Councillor Simmons

POR 2021 #67

This late policy order from Councillor Simmons asks the City Manager to ensure that the Community Development Department's [list of neighborhood organizations](#) is updated annually, including the contact information for each group. Neighborhood organizations are a crucial part of our community, amplifying residents' voices and helping to foster connections between City administration and our residents, but this list can't serve this purpose unless it's regularly, reliably updated.

This order was adopted.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. The Neighborhood & Long Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts and Celebrations Committee met on November 24, 2020 to discuss Awaiting Report response on Harvard Square street closures.

This report contains minutes from the Neighborhood & Long Term Planning Committee hearing on November 24th, 2020, focusing on potential Harvard Square street closures. [Click here](#) for more from this meeting.

This report was accepted and placed on file.

2. The Transportation and Public Utilities Committee met on February 16, 2021 to discuss snow removal on sidewalks and streets in Cambridge

This report contains minutes from the February 16th, 2021 Transportation and Public Utilities Committee meeting on snow removal in public spaces. [Click here](#) for more from this meeting.

This report was accepted and placed on file.

V. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS FROM OTHER CITY OFFICERS

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

COF 2021 #32

This communication from Mayor Siddiqui outlines the work she and the entire School Committee are doing to support CPS scholars, staff, and caregivers as in-person learning expands. [Click here](#) for her full update.

This item was placed on file.

2. A communication was received from Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui, transmitting questions for the COVID-19 Update.

COF 2021 #33

This communication contains questions asked by City Councillors that were answered in the City Manager's COVID update (City Manager's Agenda Item #1).

This item was placed on file.