



GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, RULES & CLAIMS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, December 4, 2025

3:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Government Operations, Rules, and Claims Committee will hold a public hearing on Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber to discuss the organizational changes to the Equity & Inclusion Department.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3:48 PM
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Catherine Zusy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Government Operations, Rules, and Claims Committee was held on Thursday, December 4, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:30 p.m. by the Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent*

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

*Councillor Azeem was present and remote at 3:48p.m.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss the organizational changes to the Equity and Inclusion Department. Present at the meeting was City Manager, Yi-An Huang, Chief of Equity and Inclusion, Deidre Travis Brown, Chief People Officer, Raecia Catchings, and City Solicitor, Megan Bayer. Councillor Nolan, Councillor Siddiqui, Councillor Wilson, and Mayor Simmons were also present.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized City Manager Yi-An Huang for opening remarks.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Deidre Travis-Brown who provided an overview of the response provided to the Committee related to organizational changes in the Equity and Inclusion

Department. The memo was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Vice Mayor McGovern opened Public Comment.

Marjorie Sanders spoke in opposition to the City's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Sally Waldron spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Jean Connor spoke in opposition to the City's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Caroline spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Ruth Allen spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Cathy Hoffman spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Nancy Ryan spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Phyllis Bretholtz spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Ruby Vail spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Caitlin Dube spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Jacob spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Heather Hoffman spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Robert Winters spoke in favor of reviewing departmental structures.

Emmy Howe spoke in opposition of the Ctiy's reorganization within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and spoke strongly about the Women's Commission.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who shared that he had a number of questions related to how the layoffs were handled and asked for more information

related to communication and transparency. Additionally, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked for clarification related to the concerns raised related to Ordinance language for the Women's Commission. Megan Bayer provided an overview of what requirements are listed in the language and what steps were not followed related to the recent layoffs within the Women's Commission, but noted that within other Commissions, Ordinance laws have not been followed either by the City or the City Council. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler acknowledged how certain things can change over time and it is important for the City Council to consistently review language to understand what is working and what may need to be updated.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Azeem who asked for more information on how the conversations and suggestions began within the Equity and Inclusion Department to review if changes needed to be made were decided. Deirdre Travis Brown responded by providing an overview of how the process began and why the decision to lay off employees was made, pointing out that she was in communication with the City Manager, Raecia Catchings, and the City's strategy team throughout the process. Councillor Azeem emphasized that there was room to improve the process and how the decision was carried out. Councillor Azeem asked if there would be additional layoffs in the future if the Ordinance were followed. City Manager Huang shared that his Office will be committed to following Ordinances but pointed out that many of the City Ordinance's are not being followed, including language related to the Women's Commission. The City Manager added that it will be important to review Ordinances in the future to see what language can be revised and updated. Councillor Azeem shared that in the future it is important to treat this process better, but acknowledged that it is a difficult process.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who shared that she does have concerns about how the process was followed, but pointed out it is the City Manager's decision. Councillor Zusy noted that although the City Manager has shared that the layoffs were not budget related, it is important to think about cost savings and the future impacts the budget will have. Councillor Zusy added that the idea of reviewing commissions on a regular basis is a beneficial way to understand if there needs to be restructuring. Councillor Zusy offered comments that supported the work that is done by the Women's Commission and the many lives they affect in a positive way. Councillor Zusy shared that this is a learning experience for the City and opportunity to take feedback to have a better process in the future.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who pointed out that she has been in favor of reviewing department structures for many as a way for the City to be more efficient, but spoke in opposition to the way the City Manager's Office handled the layoff of the Women's Commission. Councillor Nolan shared that there should have been a larger discussion involving the City Council before decisions were made, not after. Councillor Nolan questioned the involvement of the strategy team and why this was not part of a larger strategy discussion. Councillor Nolan pointed out that the process was not good governance and that there needs to be a better way in the future. Vice Mayor McGovern summarized some of the points that were made by Councillor Nolan related to why the restructuring was not part of a larger plan and why

these Commissions were chosen to be restructured based on past conversations the City Council has had. City Manager Huang explained that the restructuring of these Commissions was within the Department of Equity and Inclusion and that reviewing all Boards and Commissions would be more of a housekeeping exercise. City Manager Huang acknowledged that there is no easy way to inform someone that their position is being eliminated. Raecia Catchings provided an overview of the process through Human Resources once a position has been eliminated and explained why the City believes it is best practice to have someone leave that day and not return to work to assist with the department's transition. City Manager Huang and Raecia Catchings reviewed the separation package that was offered to employees that were being laid off. Vice Mayor McGovern shared concerns about not giving employees the option to stay and finish their work in a good place, even if they did not agree with the decision of them being laid off. The Vice Mayor pointed out that employees were not laid off because of a cause and shared that he disagrees with the timing of the lay offs being around the holidays. Vice Mayor McGovern shared that if programs and departments need to be evaluated in the future, there needs to be a better process, highlighting how many programs that the City offers are very important to community members and that they are also affected.

Vice Mayor McGovern had clarifying questions related to the restructuring of program managers for the different departments and Commissions. Deirdre Travis Brown reviewed each program manager and their areas of responsibility (packet page 7), and shared which positions will be posted soon to be filled. Vice Mayor McGovern spoke with strong support of reviewing all of the Ordinances, especially older ones, to understand what changes need to be made and if City laws are being followed. Vice Mayor McGovern shared when he and Councillor Nolan were members of the School Committee, they reviewed all the Ordinances and made them up to date with modern language. The Vice Mayor suggested that a Special Committee work with the Law Department in the next City Council term to begin the process of review. Vice Mayor McGovern urged the City Manager to understand the feedback that has been provided by the City Council and the public to create a better process if one is needed in the future and to rebuild trust.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Siddiqui who pointed out that if the City has been reviewing and discussing the restructuring of departments and Commissions for two years, then the Ordinance should have been looked at. Councillor Siddiqui added that she does not support the City Manager, stating that many Ordinances are not followed as a response, pointing out that it sends the wrong message. Councillor Siddiqui agreed that the process on how this was done needs work, even if the outcome was the right outcome, it was tainted by how it was achieved. Councillor Siddiqui acknowledged that these are difficult decisions to make, but the discussion with the City Council should have happened sooner, and that the process needs to be evaluated and revised if a situation like this were to happen in the future.

Vice Mayor McGovern made a motion to extend the meeting by ten minutes.

Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Toner – Absent
Councillor Zusy – Yes
Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Mayor Simmons who pointed out how many people were disappointed with the way this was handled, noting that you can do the right thing the wrong way. Mayor Simmons shared that there needs to be more support from the City and the City Council to Boards and Commissions. Mayor Simmons noted that this is an opportunity for the City to learn from and create ways to move forward and do better in terms of how employees are treated. Mayor Simmons concluded by sharing that pointing fingers at the City Manager is not going to solve anything, and that Department Heads were doing their jobs as far as restructuring. If the City Manager did not agree with his Department Heads he would have stopped it.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who acknowledged that this is a difficult conversation and there needs to be a better process moving forward. Councillor Wilson shared the importance of building a better community with employees and building trust. Councillor Wilson offered comments on how the intent of restructuring causes impacts to employees and the community, and that both deserve better throughout the process of restructuring. Councillor Wilson urged the City Manager to move forward with building a better Cambridge around employees, their work, and their needs. City Manager Huang shared that there is a commitment to engage with staff, recognizing that this decision does create a lot of questions for employees. City Manager Huang pointed out the transparency related to this topic through public discussion and acknowledged the difficult decisions that need to be made by leaders of the City, even if everyone does not agree with the outcome. Councillor Wilson stated it will be important to continue this conversation.

Vice Mayor McGovern thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Toner – Absent
Councillor Zusy – Yes
Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The Government Operations, Rules, and Claims Committee adjourned at approximately 5:40p.m.

Attachment A – Communications from the public.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. The video for this meeting can be viewed at: [Dec 4, 2025 3:30 PM - Government Operations, Rules & Claims Committee - Committee Meeting](#)

A communication was received from Matt Nelson, Director of Administration and Operations, transmitting the meeting Agenda.

A communication was received from Deidre Travis Brown, Chief of Equity and Inclusion, transmitting a response to the City Council Order regarding organizational changes in the Equity and Inclusion Department.

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment A

From: Nancy Ryan <nancyryan4@comcast.net>
Sent: Friday, December 5, 2025 10:18 AM
To: City Council; Huang, Yi-An
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: My testimony and last night's committee hearing
Attachments: Commission Restructuring Govt Ops 12_4_2025.docx

Dear City Council Members and City Manager Yi An Huang - Last night's meeting of the Government Operations Committee was deeply dissatisfying. There was not much content and no clear answers regarding 1) who was involved in the decision to reorganize the commissions? 2) why was it necessary to implement the reorganization so abruptly just before the winter holidays? 3) is this the management style we are to expect going forward? 4) what exactly are the conditions of separation that were given to the staff who were laid off and are they fair given longevity in particular?

I hope you can answer these questions to your own satisfaction and be prepared to continue to answer them to your constituents, the residents who have participated in and been served by these commissions, especially the almost 50-year-old Women's Commission.

I welcome outreach from any of you, Nancy

Below and attached is my testimony from last night:

December 4, 2025

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council Government Operations Committee:

As a 45-year resident and 25-year City of Cambridge Women's Commission Executive Director, I write to express my concerns, dismay, outrage and sadness at the summary layoffs of seven city commission staff members, including the entire three-person staff of the Women's Commission. The City Manager was clear that the staff were laid off without performance issues or due to budgetary constraints. Their dismissals were based on undefined "efficiencies" as the winter holidays approached; the staff were given 6 weeks of salary, at least four of which occur fully within the holiday period. The Chiefs of Human Resources and Equity and Inclusion, who executed the dismissals in a crude and officious manner, could give the City Council no explanation for the timing or the process, even though they claimed to have been working on this reorganization for two years. Frankly and sadly, this sounds like the phony efficiencies claimed by the federal DOGE. These firings, lay-offs, efficiencies are unprecedented in Cambridge city government – the City Council must demand an explanation and signal its own concerns about the process, timing and methods. And assert the value added to the city by experienced and talented staff left holding the bag.

Those who were laid off and the residents at large deserve some answers from the City Manager who appeared to turn to his two Chiefs who had little to offer.

I hope the Government Operations Committee will ask for answers to these questions:

- Who in the city administration was involved in the process that resulted in this untimely "reorganization?"

- Why was it conducted in secret and implemented so abruptly?
- Does the timing of the changes reflect an attempt by the administration to undermine the new charter changes that would become official on January 1, 2026? (See Section 5-1 “ORGANIZATION OF CITY DEPARTMENTS” in which the City Manager would submit a written proposal describing the rationale for such change that would trigger a public hearing.)
- Why was the ordinance establishing the Women’s Commission and requiring the City Manager to consult its members before hiring an Executive Director ignored?
- Is this method of organizational change a feature of this City Manager’s approach to how we treat city employees? The Council should want to know and should include these concerns in the upcoming City Manager’s evaluation.

And finally, I hope members of the City Council were not involved in this decision. Section 107 of the City Charter declares: “Neither the city council nor any of its committees or members shall direct or request the appointment of any person to, or his removal from, office by the city manager or any of his subordinates, or in any manner take part in the appointment or removal of officers and employees in that portion of the service of said city for whose administration the city manager is responsible.”

At City Council it was stated that the city’s commitment to these programs and Commissions remains unchanged – that statement simply cannot be true given the lack of any meaningful proposal for continuing the work or experienced staff. I am deeply disappointed in the Manager and his senior staff responsible for this shoddy, disrespectful treatment of valued staff and programs in the vague name of efficiency. We residents are not in good hands if this whole debacle represents our government’s standards.

Nancy Ryan / she/her

nancyryan4@comcast.net

617-868-1334 (h)

617-642-5449 (c)

A Public Bank for the Public Good

www.masspublicbanking.org

December 4, 2025

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At City Council it was stated that the city's commitment to these programs and Commissions remains unchanged – that statement simply cannot be true given the lack of any meaningful proposal for continuing the work. I am deeply disappointed in the Manager and his senior staff responsible for this shoddy, disrespectful treatment of valued staff and programs in the vague name of efficiency. We residents are not in good hands if this whole debacle represents our government's standards.

Erwin, Nicole

From: marjorie saunders <msaunders43@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 8:33 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public comment for the record
Attachments: this reorg was in violation of the ordinance that created the women.docx

I spoke in person tonight at the Government Operations, Rules and Claims Committee. Attached are my comments. Thank you, Marjorie Saunders

Marjorie Saunders. 7 Maple Avenue. Restructuring DEI. I am a former Commissioner on the Women's Commission and was on the committee that hired Kimberly Sansoucy. Having participated in the many struggles, losses and gains of second, third and now fourth wave feminism, the work ahead has become more rather than less challenging I spent 30 years as a community college teacher in MA, bringing women's history, literacy and literature to my diverse adult student body. Every reorganization at our institution was met with a sigh amongst faculty and staff. How was it so obvious to us who in the institution did nothing and who we continually counted on to be there for our adult students? I am here to announce unequivocally that Kimberly and Emily have consistently been those I and many in our community turn to. They have worked tirelessly for the cause of, to quote the website, "serving and advancing women and girls across economic, social, political, and educational spheres throughout the city."

What is clear in this rush to fire, purportedly two years in the making is that the shock value, being denied access to computers is a corporate tactic used for criminal behavior designed to humiliate after years of public service. To quote the open letter from the present commissioners, "it is the labor, much of it invisible and emotionally demanding, that supports survivors, sustains prevention programs,

and holds together a community safety net that the city has repeatedly claimed to value.”

This reorganization was in violation of the ordinance that created the women’s commission.

Section 2-228. Appointment and Term of Executive Director.

(a) There shall be an Executive Director of the Commission on the Status of Women whose selection and length of employment shall be determined by the City Manager with the advice of the Commission.

The commission was never consulted on these decisions.

During the pandemic, I interviewed other Women’s Commissions. This restructuring, a consolidation of all four commissions under a single DEI director, is far from new. It is the structure that exists in other towns. I brought my findings back to our Commission with pride. What a robust Women’s Commission we have. Our Commission, rather than being in name only, should in fact be a model for other cities.

Nancy Ryan, the former ED of the Women's Commission was quoted in a recent Cambridge Day article.

“Unfortunately, it (the restructuring) mirrors on a local level what's going on at a national level, and that's terrifying.”.

Thank you

Erwin, Nicole

From: Phoebe Hallahan <phoebehallahan@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 5:06 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: OEI Lay off Comments

Hello,

I was in attendance at the hearing about the layoffs in the OEI department, however I could not figure out how to speak when I was called on. I am going to share my comments below as one of the 7 people who lost their job. I was a part time employee not making enough money to survive, this is not about my job or myself personally, this is about having transparency and heart in termination of people who I know, because I worked with them, were very capable.

I know and respect Deidre Travis Brown and her position to make such decisions but there are so many questions unanswered.

What are the new goals of the restructured department that the previous department was not successfully meeting?

If you examined or attended programming and events put on by the respective commissions, it would be clear that the work being done was already intersectional, not just inside OEI but within other city departments.

People who held these positions already possessed the organizational or communicative skills. Did we look at our current employees resumes? The City of Cambridge prides itself on being a place of growth and hiring from within. You are going to hire new people when you already have capable people who know the exact work being done?

I also heard multiple statements during the hearing that were used as arguments as to why this happened from the City Manager, that are incorrect. The community wants real, honest answers and examples because I heard nothing specific. These are only a handful of concerns that the seven people who lost their jobs are unable to understand. Thank you for your time and consideration.

--

Phoebe Hallahan
339.368.0073

Erwin, Nicole

From: Ruby Vail <rubyshannonvail@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 4:38 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment Regarding 12/4 Committee Meeting

Hi -

I spoke at today's meeting regarding the termination of seven City employees at the end of last month. I think that in my nerves I didn't preface my statement with my name and address so I wanted to add my public comment here.

My name is Ruby Shannon Vail and I live at 33 Aberdeen Ave. I'm adding my voice to the many others who have expressed concern and embarrassment about the terminations of seven employees under the restructuring of the City's Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

As other have said, I am concerned about the lack of humanity in these terminations, for both the individual employees and for the communities the Commissions service; the poor timing; and the echoes to what is happening currently at the federal level.

In the memo and communications from the City Manager, the Chief of Equity and Inclusion, and the Chief People officer, there has been lots of emphasis on streamlining, promoting efficiency, and reducing redundancy. As someone for whom ADEI is so important both personally and professionally, it is work that needs to be done meaningfully, with intention, and with time. Efficiency is antithetical to this work.

Anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion work is also relational work. Folks like Phoebe, Sarah, Emily, and Kimberly (who I name specifically because I have personally attended events these individuals put together) have a wealth of robust and trust-filled relationships with other city partners, with community partners, and with the individuals their commissions serve. To terminate these employees without a process for transition and without acknowledgement of the relationship-building they have done in their roles is also not efficient. Additionally, this undermines the central components of ADEI work as well as the relational foundations of public service.

Thank you,
Ruby Vail

Erwin, Nicole

From: Brenda Shannon <fearnoart360@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 4:37 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: DEI layoffs meeting comment

An addition to my earlier comment emailed because I couldn't get through via zoom.

Brenda Shannon 96 Holworthy Street Cambridge.

It is RICH that the voice of a gentleman said in response to a commenter who used a "vulgarity". We were all instructed to take a page from this gentleman's playbook and remember we are part of a community and we should be avoiding vulgarities. The whole reason for this public meeting is to deal with the vulgarities meted out by the secret workings of these layoffs. You might as well have spit in the faces of those human beings the way you have treated them! The use of one vulgar word pales, absolutely pales in comparison to how you have treated these people who so callously have treated.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Brenda Shannon <fearnoart360@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 4:02 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Layoffs DEI

First of all, let me say that I am incredibly frustrated and have now missed 20 minutes of the meeting because of your process of registering. I use zoom all the time but there was some flaw in registering. I registered many many times and got caught in a ridiculous circuitous process. Finally I was able to dial in. By then I was completely in the dark as to what had transpired. The process gave me no faith in this meeting.

My statement:

My name is Brenda Shannon. I am a Cambridge resident residing at 96 Holworthy Street. These layoffs and restructuring smack of MAGA. It is as if the city of Cambridge (of all cities) is ashamed of DEI.

The language being used to justify this horrendous restructuring is the epitome of double speak.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Sally Waldron <boakwaldron@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 1:47 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Testimony from Sally Waldron for today's Government Operations Committee meeting
Attachments: Testimony for the Government Operations Committee.docx

Attached is the testimony I will provide today at the Government Operations meeting.

Thank you.

**To: Government Operations Committee
Cambridge City Council
Mark McGovern, Chair**

From: Sally Waldron, 194 Hamilton Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

Date: 4 December 2025

Re: Recent Commission Layoffs

I am speaking today to express my disappointment and outrage at the recent layoffs of City of Cambridge Commission staff, in particular the Commission on the Status of Women.

While much as already been articulated through letters to both the City Manager and Council and through testimony at the recent Council meeting, the key points bear repeating.

The Process

The layoffs were done in an abrupt and uncaring manner. Staff had one day's warning that something was up (namely an email asking staff to meet with the City Manager, Chief of Equity and Inclusion, and HR Director the following morning). No one on the Commission was contacted or consulted in advance (consultation is required by a City Ordinance) and the City Council was also not aware of the layoffs until after they had occurred. Although staff was laid off, and not fired, the process felt like a firing for cause: no warning, IT access immediately shut off, vacating offices that same day, etc. Why so meanly done? These were valued employees who had given many years of exemplary service to the women and girls of Cambridge. Why done mid-year when the positions were fully funded through June? In short, this is not how Cambridge treats its employees and community members. And it doesn't make sense.

The Consequence for Ongoing Services

There is no real transition of services. Deeply experienced, skilled staff are gone. There was no transfer of expertise, knowledge, and skills. Multiple commissions will now be overseen by a single Executive Director. The intent is efficiency. Will services going forward be high quality? Does the City Manager care that services will suffer? That vulnerable Cambridge residents will lose out?

The City Manager is charged with hiring and firing whom he sees fit. I'm not questioning his authority; I am questioning his decision and the manner in which it was implemented. He has to know that people who had great hopes for him are now profoundly confused. What does it mean that the Women's Commission was obliterated and long serving, respected employees with outstanding histories of care and advocacy for the women and girls of Cambridge were treated so inhumanely on his watch?

Thank you.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Catherine Hoffman <catherinehoffman@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 12:02 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Fwd: some testimony in advance of today's hearing
Attachments: winmail.dat

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Catherine Hoffman <catherinehoffman@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Dec 4, 2025 at 11:26 AM

Subject: some testimony in advance of today's hearing

To: Ayesha Wilson <amwilson@cambridgema.gov>, Burhan Azeem <bazeem@cambridgema.gov>, cathie zusy <cathzusy@gmail.com>, City Clerk <clerk@cambridgema.gov>, Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler <Jivan.sobrinhowheeler@gmail.com>, Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler <jsobrinhowheeler@cambridgema.gov>, Marc McGovern <mmcgovern@cambridgema.gov>, Patricia Nolan <pattynolanz@gmail.com>, Patty Nolan <pnolan@cambridgema.gov>, Paul Toner <ptoner@cambridgema.gov>, Simmons, Denise <dsimmons@cambridgema.gov>, Sumbul Siddiqui <ssiddiqui@cambridgema.gov>, sumbul siddiqui <sumbulsidd@gmail.com>

CC: Huang, Yi-An <yhuang@cambridgema.gov>, Brown, Deidre <DBrown@cambridgema.gov>, CResABoard <CResABoard@googlegroups.com>, Iselin Bratz <iselin_bratz@emerson.edu>, <editor@cambridgeday.com>, <managingeditor@thecrimson.com>

I plan to attend the hearing this afternoon . I appreciate the opportunity and also know that many who are upset about these firings and the impact on our multiple communities will be at work and cannot attend.

Here is some of my testimony in advance. It is the likely the 3rd or 4th testimony I have given. As the former director of the Peace Commission for 21 years in its robust years, and a lifelong Cambridge resident for matters of justice and equity as well as compassion, I have spoken out about many concerns over many decades. In all that time I have never been confronted with such unexpected, inhumane and alarming treatment of city employees or community issues.

Seven valuable city employees were fired with 10 minutes notice. They were not fired for cause, and they were not fired for budgetary reasons. Their positions were tied to commissions made up of volunteers who represent communities in Cambridge most in need of representation. The city has no history of lay-offs absent cause or open positions.

What still remains unanswered is why. Why now? Why these staff? Why these

commissions?

There has yet to be any reasonable answer about the timing which impacts so many negatively or the rationale.

The messages are loud and clear -

Anyone can be let go at any time, including in the weeks just before the winter holidays and regardless if they've been there 19 1/2 years or two.

City employees who have been recognized for exemplary contributions can be sidelined with no recognition.

The on-going vital work of the Commissions and their volunteer leadership can be dismissed or even dismantled by the City Manager. Women, GLBTQ people, minority businesses, human rights, peace and justice seekers, whose concerns were the focus of these commissions, can be summarily disrespected by the City Manager.

As the why and by whom questions get investigated by the media, the Council and others, I have some different ones for this hearing within the purview of the Council.

How can members of the council address the disrespectful and unwarranted treatment to these staff members and to the commissions they represented? Is there any leeway under which staff could be reinstated to allow for continuity and transitions? What can be implemented to address the severe impacts financially, with health care and future work for those terminated? What can be done to try and assure some uninterrupted commitment to the work of the Commissions? How can Commissioners have any sense of their worth, continuity or independence going forward?

The City Council may have no authority over hiring and firing, and until January 1, no authority over a restructuring of the commissions. However, they do have the ability to make some of this right. They do have the ability to recognize and honor the work of the Commissions and the staff that were let go. They do have the right to state that city employees without the protection of unions deserve to be treated with respect and reassurances about their employment. And perhaps after January 1 they have the authority to oversee or collaborate on a process of transparent

restructuring of the Commissions.

Because these individuals who were fired have gone unseen and unnamed as we decry their treatment and try to put some new measures of fairness in place, let's say their names

Will Belt - minority business under Office of Equity and Inclusion

Phoebe Hallahan - program coordinator for LGBTQ Commission

Sarah Sullivan - director of operations for Human Rights

Ryan Welsh - program coordinator/administrator for the Peace Commission/Police Review and Advisory Board

Emily Shield - Manager of Programs and Special Projects of Women's Commission (17 ½ years)

Kimberly Sansoucy- Executive Director - Women's Commission (19 ½ years)

Kelsey Hogan- Project Coordinator/Administrator Women's Commission

Erwin, Nicole

From: Catherine Hoffman <catherinebhoffman@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 11:26 AM
To: Wilson, Ayesha; Azeem, Burhan; cathie zusy; City Clerk; Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; McGovern, Marc; Patricia Nolan; Nolan, Patricia; Toner, Paul; Simmons, Denise; Siddiqui, Sumbul; sumbul siddiqui
Cc: Huang, Yi-An; Brown, Deidre; 'CResABoard'; Iselin Bratz; editor@cambridgeday.com; managingeditor@thecrimson.com
Subject: some testimony in advance of today's hearing

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