



HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, December 4, 2025

1:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Human Services and Veterans Committee will hold a public hearing on December 4th, 2025 to review and discuss the Executive Summary from the Community Benefits Advisory Committee which was presented to the full City Council on May 19, 2025.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1:55 PM
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

At the request of the Co-Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Absent*

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

*Councillor Siddiqui was present and remote at 1:55p.m. and in person at 2:04p.m.

Co-Chair McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss the Executive Summary from the Community Benefits Advisory Committee which was presented to the full City Council on May 19, 2025, CMA 2025 #128. Present at the meeting was Assistant City Manager for Human Services, Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Melissa Peters, and Budget Director, Taha Jennings. Also in attendance were Kwame Dance, Director of Behavioral Health for the Cambridge Community Center (CCC), Darrin Korte, CCC, Tina Alu, Executive Director the CEOC, Carl Nagy-Koechlin, Just-A-Start, Rowan Murphy, member of Community Benefits Advisory Committee (CBAC), Elena Sokolow-Kaufman, member of CBAC, Sally Beubasset, member of CBAC, Elizabeth Aguilo, Paine Senior Services and member of CBAC, Erin Muirhead McCarty, Community Art Center and member of CBAC, and Christina Turner, member of CBAC and CCF. Councillor Nolan was also present.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Ellen Semonoff, Erin Murihead-McCarty, Rowan Murphy, and Elena Sokolow-Kaufman who gave a presentation titled “Human Services and Veterans Committee Hearing, Community Benefits Advisory Committee”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized panelists for comments related to the four partnerships within the CBA. Summaries of the four partnerships are included on packet page 24.

Carl Nagy-Koechlin thanked the City Council and partners from different agencies for their continued collaboration of supporting families. Carl Nagy-Koechlin provided an overview of the initiative of Families Moving Forward and the key outcomes, such as improving housing stability and quality.

Tina Alu shared information related to the Family Stability Project. Tina Alu highlighted how the different organizations were able to strengthen their collaboration with CBAC planning and shared examples of how participants were able to receive support. Tina Alu shared information on the role staff had with participants and pointed out how many families need ongoing intervention and support over time. Tina Alu shared that the

initiative led to new partnerships, and that the goal of the initiative was to create long-term collaboration with partners that benefit staff and participants.

Erin Muirhead McCarty offered comments and an overview of the Port Arise Institute initiative, which was run by the Margaret Fuller House, Community Art Center, and Tutoring Plus. Erin Muirhead McCarty highlighted how the partnership created a relationship-based support and address needs that were lost related to COVID. Erin Muirhead McCarty explained how one on one case management was able to build long-term relationships with participants and shared that after the CBAC partnership, collaboration with other agencies continued.

Darrin Korte provided an overview of the Strengthening Families Together Project and how it provided an opportunity to support families with housing, financial, and mental health needs. Darrin Korte provided information on the essential role the Project had during COVID and how the funding from CBAC made it easier for families to access services and build stronger relationships. Kwame Dance added that having the right partnerships allowed staff to respond and support in a quick, but holistic way.

Co-Chair McGovern thanked staff and panelists for the presentation and emphasized how important collaborations within nonprofit programs are helping to strengthen the needs of Cambridge residents. Co-Chair McGovern pointed out how stronger connections and being made and acknowledged the increasing case load and limited funding nonprofits are facing.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Co-Chair Wilson who highlighted the work of nonprofit programs in Cambridge, but pointed out that there are some families who continue to not receive support due to systemic reasons or not understanding what programs are available to them. Co-Chair Wilson added how using the funds from the CBAC can strengthen the City even more and continue to provide support while also learning what is being effective and what challenges need to be addressed. Co-Chair Wilson asked panelists for feedback on how they would like to see funding be used in the future to help community organizations.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Erin Muirhead McCarty who thanked the Co-Chairs for providing a space to discuss the initiatives that were a result of funding from the CBAC and shared she would like to see funding continue supporting residents across the entire city and not just in specific areas. Elizabeth Aguilo agreed and shared that there needs to be a consistent approach for funding community benefits. Elizabeth Aguilo suggested that future discussions could help create policy about what would be an appropriate course to continue helping the community. Karl Nagy-Koechlin offered the suggestion of using community benefit funds to help support pilot projects to help with creating policy. Karl Nagy-Koechlin added how the model used with the CBAC was structured which was beneficial in reaching goals of the different initiatives. Elena Sokolow-Kaufman pointed out that much of the funding was used for basic needs and responding to unforeseen emergencies within the community. Elena Sokolow-Kaufman agreed with comments related to the funding being used to support the entire community, not just specific areas. Rowan Murphy noted how the CBAC offered flexibility during COVID and shared how the funds were easily accessible to provide grants to nonprofits, which helped reach the urgent needs of the community.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Co-Chair Wilson who asked if staff would be able to clarify how community benefit funding were used towards development in the past and currently. Co-Chair Wilson asked if staff had any suggestions on how the funding could be used for future development. Taha Jennings provided an overview of when development projects may be required to contribute funds and how they support CBAC and their efforts to address the needs of the community. Melissa Peters added additional information related to development projects and community benefits and shared how they provide positive benefits to the city, such as affordable housing and open space.

Co-Chair McGovern clarified that community benefit funding is used for both development related infrastructure and nonprofits through the CBAC. Co-Chair McGovern suggested making it clearer on where and how the funds are used so residents have a better understanding. Ellen Semonoff agreed that language used related to community benefit funding could be revised to help clarify how they are being used. Co-Chair McGovern agreed with comments that were made about the funding being more structured and provided to the entire city, not just specific areas. Erin Muirhead McCarty added that it is important to recognize the differences

in neighborhoods and how some neighborhoods may not see new development versus the neighborhoods that have.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who thanked the presenters for providing information on how funding was used. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler shared that it would be beneficial to help outline better on how mitigation funds are being used from development projects and suggested creating a specific percentage go toward the Community Benefits Fund. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler agreed with fellow speakers related to the challenges of providing support with nonprofits city wide and how development is being created in certain areas of the city. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler added that if these concerns were addressed it would align better with City goals and priorities.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Siddiqui who thanked the presenters and offered comments related to the City Council having a clearer and intentional process when making decisions. Councillor Siddiqui shared that the process for decisions being made with community benefits should be transparent process. Councillor Siddiqui pointed out how nonprofits have different needs and how funding should be able to address those needs, adding that more flexibility may be needed in the future. Councillor Siddiqui acknowledged how community benefits played a large role during COVID which helped the City support residents. Councillor Siddiqui shared that there should be stronger language with zoning and community benefits and looks forward to future conversations related to policy and achieving City goals.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who thanked the nonprofit organizations for their work and the role they had during COVID and how essential they are in the community overall. Councillor Zusy raised concerns about recent community benefit funding being used towards a development project and shared there should be a different, standardized process moving forward. Councillor Zusy acknowledged the financial challenges nonprofits face and noted how the City is also facing budget challenges, adding how increasing funding for nonprofits may create more challenges and hard decisions as it relates to the City's budget. Councillor Zusy offered suggestions on how the City may be able to continue distributing funding to nonprofits moving forward. Councillor Zusy shared support for a standard percentage of development funds going towards nonprofits while continuing to provide infrastructure improvements, noting how they are both necessary for the city.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Ellen Semonoff who provided clarification related to the 13 members of the CBAC, pointing out that only three represent nonprofits, which did not affect the committee's process. Rowan Murphy added that those who were affiliated with nonprofits would remove themselves on votes related to their organization. Rowan Murphy asked for feedback from City Councillors on how the CBAC applied the funding, noting that there were many conversations within the Committee related to how funding would be decided.

Co-Chair McGovern shared his support for nonprofits working together to help provide beneficial services to residents. Co-Chair McGovern questioned if community benefit funds would be able to fund capital projects. Taha Jennings provided clarification on how the \$20 million in community benefits funding was through zoning agreements and provided an overview of future payments that the City has limited control over. Ellen Semonoff added that the City and CBAC have little control over when development related funds are generated and pointed out that most of the remaining funds are tied to the Volpe project. Co-Chair McGovern emphasized that the City should be able to provide more support through the operating budget if development related funding is uncertain. Taha Jennings shared that with ongoing conversations and an increase of understanding the Community Benefits Fund has brought more support to nonprofits.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked how much funding is already provided with agreements and contracts with nonprofits, adding that if the City were to provide additional funding there needs to be a clear and transparent process during budget discussions.

Co-Chair McGovern asked for a timeline for the next report and thoughts on using community benefit funding to include capital projects. Ellen Semonoff shared that the CBAC had recommended removing language that would prohibit capital funding, which would be outlined in the upcoming report.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who agreed that there needs to be a transparent and consistent process, noting that there have been challenges in the past, and provided suggestions for future funding to continue nonprofit support. Co-Chair McGovern suggested changing how the City negotiates with developers could help secure funding sooner, rather than waiting for the project to be complete.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Elizabeth Aguilo, John Ferreira from Di Novo, and Darrin Korte who offered comments related to the partnership model within the CBAC, how community benefit funding allocations should be guided, and the City's budget and nonprofits.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who acknowledged the important work done by nonprofits to support families and provided suggestions for nonprofit funding, such as the City educating the community and creating more public awareness.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Melissa Peters who noted the importance of balancing the impacts of development and how allowing flexibility creates more opportunity with the funding. Melissa Peters shared support for the CBAC to have both operating and capital funding while still keeping flexibility.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Co-Chair Wilson who thanked the participants for their work and supporting Cambridge families and agreed there should be future discussions related to policy language. Co-Chair Wilson added that the City will be committed to continuing collaboration with nonprofits.

Co-Chair McGovern made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The Human Services and Veterans Committee adjourned at approximately 2:59p.m.

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:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1110?view_id=1&redirect=true

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

A communication was received from Matt Nelson, Director of Operations and Administration, transmitting a presentation.

A communication transmitted from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to the Executive Summary of the City's Community Benefits Advisory Committee's work over the past several years.