



HOUSING COMMITTEE AND THE HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, December 11, 2025

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Health and Environment Committee and Housing Committee will hold a joint public hearing on December 11, 2025 to review and discuss POR 2025 #137, which asks the Community Development Department to draft zoning language to reduce the impact on solar energy systems, based on the recommendations discussed in the September 16, 2025 Health and Environment Committee meeting.

HOUSING COMMITTEE

| Attendee Name | Present | Absent | Late | Arrived |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Burhan Azeem | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Marc C. McGovern | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Sumbul Siddiqui | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Remote |
| Ayesha M. Wilson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

| Attendee Name | Present | Absent | Late | Arrived |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Burhan Azeem | <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"/> | |
| Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Remote |
| Ayesha M. Wilson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

A joint public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Health and Environment Committee and Housing Committee was held on Thursday, December 11, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00p.m. by the Housing Co-Chair, Councillor Siddiqui. 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 Co-Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll of both Committees.

Housing Committee

Councillor Azeem – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent
Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

Health and Environment Committee

Councillor Azeem – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

Councillor Siddiqui offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to review and discuss POR 2025 #137, which asks the Community Development Department to draft zoning language to reduce the impact on solar energy systems, based on the recommendations discussed in the September 16, 2025 Health and Environment Committee meeting. Present at the meeting were Director of Zoning and Planning, Jeff Roberts, Chief Climate Officer, Julie Wormser, City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, and Zoning Project Planner, Emily Hutchings.

Councillor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan who shared that there was a member of the public who would like to provide public comment before the presentation because they cannot stay for the entire meeting. Councillor Siddiqui indicated that she would allow the speaker to provide public comment and then go to the presentation. Public comment would continue after the presentation.

Liz Loya, 21 Field Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the proposed recommendations from the Community Development Department (CDD) and provided suggestions.

Councillor Siddiqui recognized Jeff Roberts who gave a presentation titled “Zoning Protections for Rooftop Solar”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Councillor Siddiqui opened Public Comment.

Patrick Britton, 500 Green Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of solar protection and shared concerns related to the proposed recommendations from CDD.

Carol Lynn Albert, 99-101 Cushing Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of solar protection and shared concerns related to the proposed recommendations from CDD.

Marina Atlas, 37 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of solar protection and shared concerns related to the proposed recommendations from CDD.

Nancy Seidman, 9 Cleveland Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of solar protection and shared concerns related to the proposed recommendations from CDD.

Lawrence Klein, 700 Huron Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of solar protection and shared concerns related to the proposed recommendations from CDD.

Sara Nelson, 17 Rockwell Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of solar protection.

Thomas Goreau, 37 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of solar protection and pointed out how it may affect the housing crisis.

James Zall, 203 Pemberton Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of solar protection and pointed out how it may affect the housing crisis.

David Halperin, 14 Valentine Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to proposed recommendations and shared how they may affect housing.

Ned Melanson, 163 Allston Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to proposed recommendations and shared how they may affect housing.

Justin Saif, 259 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to proposed recommendations and shared how they may affect housing.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of solar protection, shared concerns, and offered suggestions.

Barrel Lipton, Oak Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of solar protection and pointed out how sunlight positively affects people.

Councillor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Azeem who acknowledged the concerns raised in public comment and explained the importance of finding a solution and balance with solar and housing. Councillor Azeem pointed out that adding additional restrictions to the already high standards related to climate and development standards may make housing even harder to build. Councillor Azeem shared that he would support having additional discussions related to incentive programs but would like the focus to be on a broader review approach.

Councillor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan who thanked staff for their presentation and explained how rooftop won't solve the climate crisis alone, just like addressing housing issues won't solve the housing crisis. Councillor Nolan noted the importance of the City putting strong efforts towards addressing both issues. Councillor Nolan added that it is also important to have more outreach with solar owners. Councillor Nolan had clarifying questions related to percentage loss. Jeff Roberts provided an overview of the percentages and pointed out that the example provided in the presentation was for a small lot scenario. Councillor Nolan spoke in favor of continuing the conversations and reviewing different approaches and incentives. Councillor Nolan added that it will be important for the Climate Committee to review and provide feedback on the proposed recommendations.

Councillor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Zusy who raised concerns related to residents installing solar but not adopting zoning protections, adding that state law allows cities to protect access to solar. Jeff Roberts clarified how the state law applies, noting it was created to prevent cities from restricting solar installations. Jeff Roberts added that zoning can encourage solar, but it cannot control protective measures. Megan Bayer provided a brief overview of Massachusetts zoning law related to solar. Councillor Zusy thanked staff for the clarification and urged that the City should protect installations that were encouraged through City programs. Councillor Zusy provided suggestions related to protecting solar and gave examples that are used in Washington D.C. Councillor Zusy added that without residents having protection it may discourage them from investing in roof top solar.

Councillor Siddiqui noted the importance of being transparent about the conversations with developers and asked how many developers the city reached out to and how they were selected. Jeff Roberts explained that there was a small number of developers staff had contacted who had experience with developing in Cambridge. Jeff Roberts added that feedback from developers is always welcomed.

Councillor Siddiqui recognized Julie Wormser who highlighted how the city is trying to balance and reach two goals, renewable energy and affordable housing, and provided examples of the review process staff went through with different options. Julie Wormser suggested monitoring the different impacts without using rooftop solar before making any zoning changes. Councillor Nolan shared concerns about not using rooftop solar and emphasized how important it is for the City to continue to move forward with renewable energy plans. Julie Wormser pointed out that staff does support rooftop solar, but there are many challenges when trying to balance the two different priorities, renewable energy and housing, adding that staff are making efforts to try and find a solution on how to address both together.

Councillor Siddiqui acknowledged the difficulty of balancing both priorities and believes there should be more discussion until everyone can come closer to an agreement on how to move forward.

**Councillor Siddiqui made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll of both Committees**

Housing Committee

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Yes – 3, No – , Absent - 2. Motion passed

Health and Environment Committee

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The joint Health and Environment and Housing Committees adjourned at approximately 5:01p.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:

[Dec 3, 2025 3:00 PM - Housing Committee and Finance Committee - Joint Committee Meeting](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1115?view_id=1&redirect=true)

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1115?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a presentation titled "Zoning Protections for Rooftop Solar".

That the City Manager is requested to work with the Community Development Department to draft zoning language based on the proposed recommendations, review the feasibility of the proposed recommendations with developers, and consider the possibility of having AHO construction be exempt from the proposed zoning. CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY COUNCILLOR AZEEM IN COUNCIL SEPTEMBER 29, 2025 FROM COMMITTEE REPORT #3