



HOUSING COMMITTEE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, July 10, 2024 **12:00 PM** **Sullivan Chamber**

The Housing Committee and Finance Committee will hold a joint public hearing to review and discuss the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust and to discuss the City's relationship with the Trust, consider funding priorities, and ways to fund affordable housing development in Cambridge.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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"/>	
Joan Pickett	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12:16 PM
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12:18 PM
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

HOUSING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12:16 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"/>	

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Councillor Nolan, Co-Chair
- Councillor Pickett, Co-Chair
- Councillor Azeem
- Vice Mayor McGovern
- Councillor Siddiqui
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler
- Councillor Toner
- Councillor Wilson
- Mayor Simmons

HOUSING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor Azeem, Co-Chair
Councillor Siddiqui, Co-Chair
Vice Mayor McGovern
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler
Councillor Wilson

A joint public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Finance and Housing Committees was held on Wednesday, July 10, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair of the Finance Committee, Councillor Nolan. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, 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 Co-Chair Nolan, City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll of both Committees.

Finance Committee

Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Pickett – Absent
Councillor Siddiqui – Absent*
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present
Councillor Toner – Absent*
Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Mayor Simmons – Present/Remote

Present – 6, Absent – 3. Quorum established.

Housing Committee

Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
Vice Mayor McGovern – 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 marked present and remote for both Committees at 12:16p.m and became present in the Sullivan Chamber at 12:35p.m.**

***Councillor Toner was marked present and remote at 12:18p.m.**

Co-Chair Nolan that the Call of the meeting was to review and discuss the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust and to discuss the City's relationship with the Trust, consider funding priorities, and ways to fund affordable housing development in Cambridge. Present at the meeting was City Manager, Yi-An Huang and Housing Director, Chris Cotter. Co-Chair Nolan shared that Susan Connelly was present via Zoom and available to respond to questions and comments regarding the Trust and shared her experience regarding housing.

Co-Chair Nolan offered opening remarks and read the following (not verbatim). Over the years, the council has wanted to better understand the functioning of the AHT and there have been calls for more user-friendly communication of the work of the Trust. And recently there was a citizen's petition about the composition of the Board of the AHT, so there is significant public interest in better understanding the operations of the Trust. Which makes sense, since it is probably the single largest financial entity outside of the regular department budget - with tens of millions of dollars allocated to it annually. And the AHT is a key source of funding for Affordable Housing projects within the city.

The Cambridge AHT was formed before the state created the legislation which allowed cities and towns to form Affordable Housing Trusts, so our own AHT differs slightly from the state model. That state framework shares much of what Cambridge has, and other communities use as their form. The sense is that, as in other areas, Cambridge is doing a lot and has accomplished a lot, due to the extraordinary resources the city has allocated to the Trust. And still there may be ways that the operations can be improved - we can always learn from others, as others can learn from us. Something Cambridge has sought to do recently is to open up and seek out those best practices - share ours and learn from others. That perspective is healthy, to end the insularity that too often Cambridge has had as a culture.

The presentation is mostly on the work of the Trust, and current projects. Following the discussion on that, we hope to have a discussion on questions that have come up related to transparency, communication, training, policies, and any other matters that would move us all forward to a better understanding of the Trust and improved functioning of the Trust.

Co-Chair Nolan recognized City Manager Huang who offered brief remarks and introduced Chris Cotter and the members of the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) who were present both via Zoom and in the Sullivan Chamber. Chris Cotter gave a presentation titled "Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust Overview", which was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation included a review of AHT, projects the Trust helps to fund, increase of housing units, revenue sources within Trust funding, and an overview of existing and future developments. During the presentation members from the City, Susan Connelly, and members of the Trust were available to respond to questions and comments that came forward from Co-Chair Nolan, Vice Mayor McGovern, and Councillor Azeem.

Co-Chair Nolan opened Public Comment.

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, provided comments regarding safety in the areas of proposed AHT developments.

Frederico Muchnik, 82 Richdale Avenue, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on the AHT's relationship with the Planning Board.

Sierra Dearn, 7 Temple Street, Cambridge, MA, YWCA, shared their strong support for the Cambridge Housing Justice Coalition Citizen's Petition to amend the AHT.

Sara Barcan, 280 Franklin Street, Cambridge, MA, Executive Director HRI, offered comments of support of the relationship between HRI, AHT, and the City to provide affordable housing units.

Justin Saif, 259 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, shared that the AHT is underfunded in order to be able to provide the affordable housing Cambridge needs.

Marilee Meyer, 10 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns relative to height, density, and zoning of building more affordable housing.

Valerie Bonds, 812 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA, offered comments of both support and concern regarding the AHT.

Carl Nagy-Koechlin, 1035 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA, Just A Start, offered comments of support for the AHT and the Affordable Housing Overlay.

Suzanne Blier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, noted the importance of working on the issues around the environment and bicycling, as well as the State.

Dan Totten, 54 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of affordable housing and that being transparent is important.

Eve Sullivan, 144 Pemberton Street, Cambridge, MA, shared comments that were not in favor of the proposed development at Walden Square.

Lee Farris, 269 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the AHT being more transparent with the public.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of public involvement and offered comments relative to funding.

James Zall, 203 Pemberton Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of strengthening the AHT and encouraging and assisting the production of more affordable housing units.

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to close public comment.

City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll of both Committees.

Finance Committee

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Absent

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Present

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Absent

Yes – 6, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

Housing Committee

Councillor Azeem – Yes
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Wilson – Yes
Yes – 5. Motion passed.

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who asked if the AHT has the authority to monitor buildings. Chris Cotter shared that the AHT has the authority to inspect and monitor buildings for compliance. Chris Cotter pointed out that when there are concerns, they are referred to the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). Chris Cotter also shared that when ISD sees a pattern in certain buildings, they will notify the proper people if it is a city funded building or a building where the City has some involvement.

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who shared that she appreciates the conversation and the comments made during public comment. Councillor Wilson shared the importance of having the AHT be utilized to help the community in addition to recognizing the challenges of some of the quality of the maintenance in some of the units. Chris Cotter noted that funding for the Trust is not generally available for maintenance and shared an example of how the City and the AHT would approach a situation where maintenance is needed in a building funded by the AHT.

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who shared that she would support having more conversations around helping with the maintenance of buildings. Councillor Siddiqui asked what the on boarding of new members is like beyond the Open Meeting Law training. Chris Cotter responded by sharing the different opportunities and appropriate training they are trying to connect members with as they continue to bring new members on. In addition, Susan Connelly provided examples of the different training courses that are available.

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who made a motion to recess the meeting.

City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll of both Committees.

Finance Committee

Councillor Azeem – Absent
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Nolan – Yes
Councillor Pickett – Absent
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Toner – Absent
Councillor Wilson - Yes
Mayor Simmons – Absent
Yes – 5, No – 0, Absent – 4. Motion passed.

Housing Committee

Councillor Azeem – Yes
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Wilson – Yes
Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The joint Finance and Housing Committee meeting went into recess at 2:04p.m.

Attachment A – The City Clerk’s Office received seven written communications

Clerk’s Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/786?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Chris Cotter, Housing Director Cambridge Community Development Department, transmitting Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust Overview.

Perez, Lori

From: Toner, Paul
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 4:12 PM
To: hwalker434@rcn.com; Pickett, Joan
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: RE: City's Relationship with the Affordable Housing Trust

Helen:

I have copied the City Clerk

[Paul F. Toner](#)
Cambridge City Councillor
Office: (617) 349-4280
Mobile: (857) 998-0194
Email: ptoner@cambridgema.gov
792 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/citycouncil>

From: hwalker434@rcn.com <hwalker434@rcn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 2:51 PM
To: Toner, Paul <ptoner@cambridgema.gov>; Pickett, Joan <jpickett@cambridgema.gov>
Subject: City's Relationship with the Affordable Housing Trust

Dear Councillors Toner and Pickett,

I would like you to have a copy of my comments delivered today to the joint hearing of the Housing Committee and the Finance Committee. I was attempting to cast light on an important safety concern that I hope the Council will look into, and, by extension, to highlight a wrinkle in the approval process. Interestingly, this account just appeared in the *Cambridge Day*. <https://www.cambridgeday.com/2024/07/09/affordable-housing-additions-at-walden-square-move-forward-with-planning-board-misgivings/>

Best regards,
Helen Walker

Since today's hearing is about the City's relationship with the Affordable Housing Trust, I want to highlight a current situation that needs Councillors to ask questions today.

On July 2nd, the Planning Board held its second AHO Design Consultation for new housing at 21 Walden Square Road. The first Design Consultation was in March, when the Planning Board and two CDD memos expressed concerns about **site circulation**, specifically **safety of pedestrian and bicycle traffic**, given that building A will be built over the existing internal Walden Square Road. On July 2nd, Planning Board members found little improvement in safety. Despite minor tweaks, site circulation was still confusing, with unclear direction for bicycles. Were the bicycles supposed to meander through the parking lots, or would they end up in the tunnel with the cars, which could be

dangerous. (You admit you have a problem when one sign in the signage package says "Cyclist to dismount, walk bike.") Unfortunately circulation was originally designed around cars, and, with all the new construction, there is not much room to make the necessary changes.

The Planning Board was dismayed to find that the Affordable Housing Trust had already approved funding without waiting for Board comments, which will insist on more intensive work to improve safety of site circulation. The Board was told that of course funding would be contingent on the Planning Board report. But will the developer heed the new report any more than the previous two? The Trust will not be meeting again until September; the developer clearly feels that enough time has been spent studying site circulation; the developer got his promise of approval because he is in a hurry to get in line for State funding. Theoretically the need to secure Trust funding promotes compliance with City goals. But here the outcome looks uncertain. Knowing that Councillors care deeply about bicycle safety, I urge you to apply pressure in favor of safety.

Thank you.

Perez, Lori

From: Heather Hoffman <heather.m.hoffman.1957@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 1:58 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: I thoroughly repudiate every word James Zall said about me

In a true *tour de force*, Mr. Zall grossly misquoted me and mischaracterized what I said in ways that are breathtaking. Everything I said was aimed at empowering the people who live in affordable housing, and I made that crystal clear over and over. Unlike Mr. Zall, I care about the conditions in which the people who live in affordable housing live. I care about whether they are treated with respect, whether they feel comfortable speaking out, and whether their living conditions are those we would demand for any human being.

Mr. Zall's words were despicable. I note that no Councillor, especially Councillors who love to police the words of certain public commenters, felt the need to correct his slanderous misstatements.

I ask that this be included in the report of this meeting and that it be made publicly available for the continuation of the meeting.

Heather Hoffman

Perez, Lori

From: Sara Barcan <sbarcan@homeownersrehab.org>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 1:44 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Testimony for Joint Housing and Finance Committee 7 10 24
Attachments: Sara Barcan HRI Testimony Housing & Finance 7 10 24.docx

Please see attached testimony. Thank you.

Sara E. Barcan (She/her/hers)

Executive Director
Homeowner's Rehab, Inc. | CNAHS

Phone: 617.868.4858 ext.207 | Mobile: 617-831-3953
Email: sbarcan@homeownersrehab.org

280 Franklin St., Cambridge, MA 02139
www.homeownersrehab.org

Perez, Lori

From: Catherine Zusy <cathzusy@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 12:07 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk; Huang, Yi-An
Subject: Why commit \$18m of City money to a developer who manages properties poorly?!

That's throwing away good money after bad.

Yes, we need to build more affordable housing but we should entrust reputable firms with this responsibility.

Cathie

Perez, Lori

From: Richard Krushnic <rkrushnic@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 10:17 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: multifamily zoning

Do no harm.

New citywide multifamily zoning must apply ONLY to inclusionary projects. If it does not, then many projects of less than 10 units would be built in the dense areas of the city, displacing existing residents, and providing NO affordable units. Land is cheaper in these neighborhoods, and development would be more profitable there for that reason, and because no affordable units would be required.

If the new zoning only allowed inclusionary projects, then it would be more difficult to site them in dense neighborhoods, because of small lot sizes, that, even with the new zoning, would not accommodate 10 units, but only accommodate smaller projects.

If the new zoning were accompanied by an inclusionary cut-out that only could be used with this new zoning, bringing inclusionary down to 5 units or more, then more would be developed in the dense parts of the city. Say, 1 affordable unit in a 5-7 unit building, and 2 affordable units in an 8 or 9 unit building.

Perez, Lori

From: James Mahoney <jj@mahoney.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 9:15 AM
To: Planning Board Comment; CDDat344; City Council
Cc: mobrien@winnc.com; Marc; City Clerk; City Manager; Federico Muchnik
Subject: Walden Square Road/Winn Development

Dear All,

According to Mr. Rafferty and Winn at the recent Planning Board meeting, they are assuming that this project will happen as they wish. Apparently CDD and AHT agree. This despite significant public objections and the Planning Board's serious concerns.

Undoubtedly, more affordable housing is a good thing. But so is the fabric of the city, so evolving our cityscape in a well-considered manner is essential to maintaining the character that makes Cambridge a desirable place to live. Many examples for Winn to emulate already exist, are nearing completion, or have been approved in this section of the city. Among them are:

- Lincoln Way
- Jefferson Park renovation
- Masse's Hardware apartments on Walden St
- The new low-rise at the corner of Rindge and Alewife Brook Parkway
- New Street
- St. James Episcopal Church development
- Frost Terrace, 1791 Mass Ave
- Dudley/Mass Ave redevelopment

Early in this process, knowledgeable people proposed an alternative to Winn's current plan that was more sensitive to the surrounding area and the existing built environment. Clearly, there are better ways to increase housing on that site, but it appears that Winn is adamantly committed to doing what they want regardless of any viable alternative approach.

CDD explained that the AHT conditionally approved funding at their last meeting because they wouldn't be meeting again until September, and they didn't want Winn to wait that long for funding approval. That rings hollow because according to AHO rules, AHT needs to consider the Planning Board's comments prior to the AHT taking action. Yet, they cannot remove the "conditional" from their funding award until they meet in September anyway, so why the rush?

This is yet another factor that reinforces the impression that Winn and its allies are forcing this proposed development through the city, despite every reasonable opposition.

I am fully in support of increasing the availability of affordable housing here. I grew up in Cambridge, the son of a truck driver and a waitress, and I understand the value of a vibrant and varied resident population. I also understand the value of a well-considered cityscape, and how that cityscape can easily fracture, as parts of the city did during the free-for-all developments of late '60s and early '70s.

I support the Planning Board's significant reservations about this project. Let's do it right.

Sincerely,

James Mahoney
234A Walden St
617-945-9280

Perez, Lori

From: Andy Zucker <andyzucker@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 9, 2024 8:42 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Walden Square project

Council Members:

The Planning Board correctly had a variety of concerns about the ill-conceived Winn Development project proposed for Walden Square. I hope the City Council and its various committees will listen to the more than 1,000 people who are on record opposing the build-it-even-if-it's-a-lousy-plan philosophy behind the project.

Andy Zucker
35 Winslow St, Cambridge, MA 02138

