

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSITY
RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Tuesday, December 16, 2025**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
UNIVERSITY RELATIONS
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Councillor Wilson, Chair
Vice Mayor McGovern
Councillor Siddiqui
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler
Councillor Toner

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Tuesday, December 16, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:30 a.m. by the acting 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, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote
Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Wilson – Present/Remote

Present – 5. Quorum established.

Vice Mayor McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to hold a public hearing with the Cambridge Office for Tourism to provide an update on the Tourism Office’s efforts as it relates to destination marketing, visitor services, as well as an update on the Tourism Destination Marketing District program. Vice Mayor McGovern shared that Councillor Wilson, who is the Chair of the Committee, would be participating remotely, and as the most senior member of the Committee he would be chairing the meeting. Present at the meeting was Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Melissa Peters, Director of Economic Development, Pardis Saffari, and Director of Administration and Operations, Matt Nelson. Present from the Cambridge Office for Tourism (COT) was Executive Director, Candice Beaulieu, General Manager Marriott Kendall Square and Vice President of the Board, Jennifer Pendola, Board President and President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, David Maher. Also present was Councillor Zusy and Mayor Simmons.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who shared her excitement for the conversation and highlighted that she looks forward to the expansion and partnership with the COT.

Vice Mayor McGovern opened public comment.

Matthew Stephens, 580 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA, Present and CEO of Mount Auburn Cemetery and COT Board Member, spoke in strong support for the COT and provided examples of how COT brings Cambridge together.

Ana Sortun, 4 Puffer Lane, Oleana, spoke in strong support for the COT and how they partner with small business owners.

Adam Sperling, 1 Bennett Street, Cambridge, MA, Charles Hotel, spoke in strong support for the COT and pointed out how it is essential to have for a local, growing economy.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Toner who made a motion to suspend the rules to allow Denise Jillson to speak for over three minutes.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

Denise Jillson, Cambridge, MA, Executive Director HSBA, spoke in strong support of POR 2025 #117 and questioned City funding towards the COT.

Michael Monestime, Cambridge, MA, President of Central Square BID, spoke in support of creating positive partnerships with the COT and the City to create strong outcomes for a better Cambridge.

Patrick Barrett, 907 Main Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of creating positive partnerships with the COT and the City to help small business owners.

Vice Mayor McGovern noted that there are additional speakers who would like to provide public comment after the presentation.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized the team from COT who gave a presentation titled “Cambridge Office of Tourism”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Vice Mayor McGovern opened public comment.

John DiGiovanni, Cambridge, MA, Trinity Properties, urged the City, businesses associations, and COT to collaborate for better results.

Jason Alves, Cambridge, MA, Executive Director of ECBA, spoke in support of business associations and the work done through the COT and urged the City to invest in business associations to create a stronger community.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Toner who congratulated Candace Beaulieu on recently being appointed as the Executive Director for COT. Councillor Toner had clarifying questions related to the baseline of City funding for the Tourism Destination Marketing District (TDMD), and if City funding could be reduced. Candace Beaulieu responded by providing an overview of the state legislation and how it applies to TDMD funding, adding that there is no baseline amount that is required. Councillor Toner asked if a reduction would impact TDMD funding. Matt Nelson provided additional information related to TDMD legislation and the City's budget, noting that reallocating the funding may create some challenges and it would be beneficial for the Law Department to review what is possible. Councillor Toner thanked staff for addressing funding questions and emphasized the importance of collaboration with business associations, COT, and the City, while also finding alternative ways to support funding.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Mayor Simmons who thanked the presenters and highlighted the ongoing commitment the City has had to the COT to attract visitors to the City. Mayor Simmons shared concerns about the collaboration between the COT and business associations, adding that recent relationship between the two has not been strong. Mayor Simmons offered the suggestion of creating a committee to help strengthen coordination, resources, and collaboration. Mayor Simmons asked for clarification on how tourism data is collected and measured to understand visitor activity through Placer AI and how that information is shared. Candace Beaulieu indicated that Placer AI data is used on an ongoing basis to help understand and review visitor and resident patterns as well as looking at advertising and social media related to visiting Cambridge. Candace Beaulieu added that reports are shared with business associations monthly. Mayor Simmons shared concerns related to the tourism kiosk located in Harvard Square and questioned why advertising space on the kiosk was being used for organizations outside of Cambridge and how CultureHouse was selected. Mayor Simmons concluded by adding that an additional meeting may be needed to address concerns.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Melissa Peter who explained the process on how CultureHouse was selected and noted that they are required to receive additional funding not from the City. Melissa Peters provided additional information related to the contract and shared she would look more into the advertisement by CultureHouse.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who thanked staff for their presentation and shared an overview of his conversation with City Manager Huang related to legal restrictions within the original Policy Order. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler added that the City should help both the COT and business associations so they can work together collaboratively. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler reviewed possible options on how the City can move forward as well as how the City can help with collaboration and looks forward to future discussions.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Matt Nelson who provided a brief overview of how the Office of Tourism was created, adding that it is governed by an independent board and that the City Manager does not have authority to hire staff.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Siddiqui who shared that she agrees with comments that were made by previous Councillors. Councillor Siddiqui shared concerns about what the overall goal was of the discussion and that discussing more support for business associations may be a separate issue from funding tourism. Councillor Siddiqui shared that the presentation was helpful but would look forward to having more conversation.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Pardis Saffari who noted that she understands that there needs to be improvement towards collaboration, which was mentioned both by Councillors and during public comment. Pardis Saffari shared that during COVID there were consistent meetings happening with the City, business associations, and the Office of Tourism, which she would be happy to start again.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who thanked everyone for their work and highlighted how tourism in Cambridge comes from combined efforts and not just one organization. Councillor Wilson agreed with previous comments related to the COT, business associations, and others to be working together and have strong partnerships and goals. Councillor Wilson asked what efforts were being made towards marketing, especially with the upcoming FIFA event, as well as creating stronger partnerships in the upcoming year. Candace Beaulieu provided an overview of the planning and advertising efforts that have begun related to FIFA events and future summer plans, such as Tall Ships and Mass 250. Pardis Saffari added that City staff have been in ongoing discussion with COT regarding FIFA events and provided an overview of permits and licenses agreements that would be required for certain events. Pardis Saffari added that when there is clearer information related to permits, the City will be reaching out to businesses associations to provide information. Councillor Wilson pointed out that her previous question was not FIFA specific and emphasized that stronger relationships with business associations need to be met soon. Candace Beaulieu agreed that there needs to be efforts made to rebuild a strong relationship with the business associations and that she is committed to working with them collaboratively going forward. Councillor Wilson thanked everyone for their work and shared she looks forward to seeing the two work together.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who thanked the COT for the presentation and shared concerns about information related to COT not being as visible as it should be to the public. Councillor Zusy offered suggestions related to being more transparent, such as an annual report. Councillor Zusy agreed that the collaboration between COT and the business associations needs to be stronger and shared ideas on how the partnership could be strengthened. Councillor Zusy asked for more information related to recent declines that was shown in the data and the “Cambridge Unpacked” campaign. Candace Beaulieu acknowledged that an annual report would be beneficial and it is part of her goals as she steps into her new role as Executive Director. Candace Beaulieu shared that the decline in November is consistent with seasonal trends and that the COT is exploring ways to have stronger tourism during the colder months. Councillor Zusy emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships between COT and business associations.

Vice Mayor McGovern asked why members from the business associations were not included on the Board for the Office of Tourism. Candace Beaulieu explained that there have been members who have served on the Board in the past and that it is something that she plans to review moving forward. David Maher shared his strong support for Candace Beaulieu and that the Board is committed to working with her to address concerns that have been raised.

Vice Mayor McGovern offered closing remarks and shared that he would be sending follow up questions to COT related to Cambridge events and collaboration with business associations. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that all visitors to Cambridge benefit the City. The Vice Mayor echoed the need for collaboration and having shared goals between COT and business associations. Vice Mayor McGovern added that the City should review ways where it can better support business associations, and that collaboration between everyone would strengthen the city overall.

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

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The Economic Development and University Relations Committee adjourned at approximately 1:31p.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 16, 2025 11:30 AM - Economic Development & University Relations Committee - Committee Meetings](#)