



FINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

2:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Finance committee will meet to consider the City Council goals in relation to the budget and to gather input and discuss priorities on the FY23 budget.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Dennis J. Carlone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A communication was received from Taha Jennings, Budget Director, transmitting a presentation for the Finance Committee meeting on February 16, 2022

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Feb 16, 2022 2:30 PM (Committee Reports)



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN, CHAIR

COMMITTEE MEETING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

FEBRUARY 16, 2022

2:30 PM, SULLIVAN CHAMBER

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Feb 16, 2022 2:30 PM (Committee Reports)

The Finance committee will meet to consider the City Council goals in relation to the budget and to gather input and discuss priorities on the FY23 budget.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: ..uh, has each year, but at least some opportunity earlier on in the process before the budget is put on the table for community input and for City Council input.

Last year in March, March 29th of 2021, I had put in a policy order asking for budget roundtable. And in subsequent discussion, it was clear that that was a little bit late, that a budget roundtable in, in April, because obviously March 29th, the earliest it could have been scheduled would've been the end of April, was a little too late in the process.

But we used that policy order as incentive and, um, inspiration for, uh, Chair Carlone and I to reach out to the, uh, city staff in January to say, let's, let's try to find a time in early February when we can have a meeting for the council. And that is what has resulted in this meeting. So I want to just make a couple of points and be transparent and open and honest.

There is some trepidation among city staff when we

said we wanted to do this. They're afraid that we're each gonna come up with lots of proposals, each costing millions of dollars, and that they won't be all able to be fully funded, or that the community will flood us with requests for tons of new ideas.

Uh, Co-Chair Carlone and I are clear that our intent is simple, straightforward, and in keeping with our role as Finance Co-Chairs, it is not to flood everybody with a whole host of really new ideas, it really is to provide an opportunity for the city to hear from all of us in a coordinated manner, the kinds of things that we hope and expect to see in the budget.

And it's also to establish a process for future years so that there's input into the budget as a collaborative joint effort, the City, the City Council, and the Community.

We also noted in our, uh, prep meetings, uh, for this meeting, that it is always helpful as a reminder to everyone listening in to--if you're identifying new spending opportunities, I certainly have many, I'm sure all of us have many. It's also a good idea to at least sometimes think about possible efficiencies or savings so

that the budget can stay balanced if--especially later on in the process as this is happening now, any ideas put forth may require some adjustment in the budget.

With that, I'll turn it over to, uh, Councillor, uh, and Finance Co-Chair Carlone, and then we'll turn to the city.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Uh, thank you, Co-Chair Nolan, and appreciate your introductory comments, which speak to many of the issues that I would bring up. Uh, by the way, I am a parent of people who've--of two sons who've gone through the school system, and my wife and I actually were very involved in the old Harrington School and high school, um, with a series of programs that we were, uh, integral--integrally, uh, related to.

Um, all I wanted to say is that both, uh, Councillor Nolan and I, and, and like many of you, uh, have looked at the goals of the council, um, I was, uh, one of the people behind pushing the council to have goals. When I became a councillor in 2014, there were no goals, which shocked me. And I kept waiting for meetings to have a goal, to set goals, and it didn't happen that whole term, it happened my second term.

And I don't see how we can do a budget without relating it to goals, which we now have, which is good. And we've asked the city administration to let us know how much money is in each of the goals. What are we doing to meet these goals? That's the process, that's the charter.

Um, so we've begun working on that. Both Councillor Nolan and I have looked at the goals and thought of some refinements, which we'll share, and Councillor might talk more about that later.

Um, the other thing is I started thinking of the budget and I looked at it a little differently. This is my fifth, uh, fifth term, so this is the ninth budget I've been a part of. What are we missing? What are we very low on? And I'm not expecting, just like Councillor Nolan, that we're gonna change everything at the last minute, but just a few thoughts.

We've talked about prekindergarten, preschool, um, the other night. Uh, there's no doubt in my mind that we should be aiming for all two to four year olds. All the intellectual information indicates at that having a diverse group at two to four year old level is critical for learning.

I didn't have that and I was a slow beginner, especially reading, um, open space. I've mentioned a number of times. We are approximately half of the national average and certain neighborhoods, the port, are just barely one-fifth of the national average for neighborhoods. Um, that's deplorable. And again, I don't expect a big change in this budget, but when there are opportunities, they need to be taken.

Um, we've talked about in the past--and it's not just me, we've talked about permanent housing for the unhoused, for those people on the street. I was stunned when we recently had a Housing Committee meeting, and the total production is, we have 12 units in the process of being built in the city.

Uh, the Vice Mayor certainly mentioned, and others, food for those people who are hungry. And, and Councillor McGovern, I recall years ago mentioning as much as 18% of people in our city have hunger issues. Um, what are we doing with that?

I know my Co-Chair, um, and others, Councillor Zondervan, uh, have issues related to environmental preparation. Uh, I am reading the book "Collapse" now by

Jared Diamond. Unbelievable what's happening in other countries. And we're not that far ahead of them as far as, uh, environmental dangers.

And lastly, and I'll stop here, pedestrian improvements, pedestrian safety, slowing traffic in neighborhoods. Um, I was stunned last budget by how little money we're putting in, in reworking roads, making them safer. Um, we have to look at these things.

So, it's--I'm looking at it the opposite way, not what we've done in the past and adding 3% or 4%, um, but looking at where we--we are really lacking for such a wealthy city. I'll stop there. Thank you, Co-Chair Nolan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Uh, thank you, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone. At this point, if--I'd like to turn it over to the city, I believe it will be, um, Assistant City Manager Kale, and, uh, Director Jennings. But, uh, City Manager, uh, DePasquale is on. Uh, if you would like to, uh, start us off, it's, it's totally up to you where we go from here.

CITY MANAGER LOUIS A. DEPASQUALE: Uh, thank you Madam Chair. And, uh, I, I was gonna let David and Taha speak, but I, I think I have to just say a few words here, and I

want them to come across in no way in a negative format. But I've been doing budgets in this city for 35 years and I just--it's hard to listen to all the things we're not doing because there is no city, and I will say this over and over again, that's a member of Metro Mayors, someone who's on the government finance review of budgeting for over 20 years, that does more than Cambridge. And I just think we have to remember that.

The other thing, again, and I know that we are trying to change format, but the school committee's role in a budget is a hundred percent different than the City Council role under the charter. So, I think this is a constructive meeting. I think it's important that we listen and hear, but I do think we need to be clear that the council role is different than the school committee's role by charter. And I think that all has to play moving forward. And this will be my last budget, but I think moving forward, whoever comes in is gonna have to be able to recognize that this is not a school committee budget, it's a City Council budget. And there are different guidelines, coz this is the city manager's budget, where the school committee does have authority at all levels on the school budget, the City

Council does not on the manager.

So, I appreciate this meeting, I appreciate working with the chairs, I appreciate you calling us ahead of time, but I can't agree with the pictures as bleak as we've started out with today. And I'll turn it over to David. Thank you.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: Okay. So, what we have is, uh, Taha will take you through some, um, information about the operating budget for the, uh, city. And, um, and then I will, um, also provide some information, um, uh, at the end about process. But, uh, Taha, why don't you start it off and share your screen and give a brief summary of the operating budgets and, um, uh, we'll take it from there. Thank you.

BUDGET DIRECTOR TAHA JENNINGS: Thank you, David, and thank you to the co-chairs. Can everyone see that screen okay, and hear me okay? Okay, great. Um, so I think it's just helpful to just write a little bit of context on, uh, the current budget and the process. Um, right now the FY22 operating budget is \$748 million, the FY22 capital budget is \$83.9 million. And as part of that, uh, budget adoption process, the city manager makes recommendations for funds

to be appropriated by department and also by statutory category.

And the statutory, statutory categories or salary and wages, other ordinary maintenance, travel and training, and extraordinary expenditures. And throughout the year, as, as you're well aware, there's typically also several supplemental budget appropriations and transfers, um, to reflect, uh, different initiatives or programs or needs that come up, uh, during the fiscal year.

Uh, in terms of government function, uh, education is our largest expenditure category, um, at 223.7 million. Um, that's, uh, followed by community maintenance and development. Um, and that function of government includes departments such as community development, public works, water, um, historical commission. Uh, expenditures there for FY22 totaled over \$165 million.

Uh, the next general category of expenditures, public safety, this includes police and fire, but also inspection services, license commission, traffic, and parking. Um, that--those expenditures totaled 161.5, uh, million dollars for FY22. And then there's Human Resource Development. This is, uh, Department of Human Service Programs, veterans

commission, the library, human rights commission, um, a few others, women's commission. Um, and those expenditures are budgeted at \$64.2 million.

Intergovernmental includes payments to the Mass Water Resource Authority, um, as well as, uh, our Cherry Sheet assessments and payments that we make to the Health Alliance, and that totaled 63.6 million. Uh, it should point out that, um, 65% of the operating budget is related to salary and wages. So, the people, uh, who work in the city makeup, you know, a big chunk of what, uh, budgeted expenditures are, are spent on.

Um, as I mentioned, the school department's, our largest, our largest, uh, category of expenditures at over \$223 million. Um, and we also budgeted \$32 million for affordable housing, although that, that's in, that's in the capital budget, and that includes CPA funding as well. Uh, \$54 million is budgeted for the Department of Public Works, um, \$46 million for Human Service programs, and again, \$83.9 million, uh, for capital projects.

Um, and so, and, and those expenditures really kind of represent, you know, um, what department needs based on a lot of the City Council goals and, and priorities that we

hear from the community. And I'll, I'll turn it over to, uh, David to go over that in a little more detail.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: And, Taha, do you have the next slide about the operating budget growth?

BUDGET DIRECTOR TAHA JENNINGS: Sure.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: Yeah. Just, just to highlight, um, the budget over the last 10 years has grown by \$260 million or 53.3% over this period. And I, I just, um, I would say that that's over 5% a year and it's over \$26 million a year, an increase on average, and I think, um, I think we, I think that's an indicative of the fact that we have tried to increase budgets to address priority areas.

I would say from fiscal '18 to fiscal '22, the city has added over 107 positions to address priority areas. Uh, that's in addition to whatever the school department has increased their position count, and I think the number in recent years is over 150 positions.

So, I would just, again, I, I appreciate the co-chair's, uh, framing of the, um, expectations for this meeting, and I appreciate the fact that this is a, um, uh, session for us to hear. But I would also just say that, um,

I think that we have a lot of vehicles for us to develop the budget and to have inputs.

Obviously, we do have the City Council goals, uh, we do have City Council policy orders that are submitted, uh, every week, uh, we do listen to the school department and their, um, long-range plan, um, we do have departmental initiatives, uh, we do have round tables, uh, citizen advisory boards and commissions.

Uh, there are numerous conversations that happen with councillors, uh, during the fiscal year that inform priority areas. Uh, there are several subcommittee City Council, uh, meetings that basically provide input for priority areas. Uh, there in the past have been Blue-ribbon committees.

So, I, I guess--I think in addition to adding this piece of the puzzle, I think there are a lot of inputs that the city manager has to understand what the priority areas are and what the areas that we focus on, um, to basically provide a budget to the City Council in meeting those areas of input. And I guess the evidence is, is that we've had significant budget growth over the years. And again, I think this, this tool today is a way to allow the council

to provide, um, information as a, um, uh, and again, I think Councillor Carlone said it, and Councillor Nolan, about, you know, a listing that may be a framework, uh, uh, as a priority list basis to be developed. Um, and again, as one more piece of this puzzle, as we try to develop our budget.

I, I would say that, uh, for this fiscal year, we're deep, very deep into the budget process and we're near the end. Um, and so we are trying to, um, uh, balance everything out and, uh, trying to work on the production of the document. So I would say that we look forward to hearing this, but I would say that, uh, and again, just to reemphasize, I think this is a longer approach, but, um, in terms of what, um, will or will--won't be add to the budget, I think we're gonna listen.

I just want to make sure that the expectations are realistic because some of the items that I'm sure what will be talked about require multi-year, um, uh, planning process in terms of how we do this. I would say that, you know, a few years back, uh, we had a meeting with, uh, the City Council. And, uh, a desire to double the amount that we allocated for affordable housing was a goal. We've been

able to achieve that, uh, in a, in a shorter period of time than what we initially projected by having the time to plan and, uh, fit that within our financial framework. I think, uh, we've been asked, and we've developed these over the years to help, uh, the council see how we spend our money. And within the budget book, there's a consolidated spending category that we've developed over the other years to sort of give some context, uh, to what we spend our money on, in particular areas of, of housing and homelessness, uh, as well as, uh, diversity training and the like.

Um, I think this year we're adding a component of the budget to be able to allocate how we spend our money by the, uh, City Council goals by department, to give a, a snapshot about where we're spending money with regard to the goals. So I do think that we do listen to the council, we do want to work collaboratively, but I, I think that this is a, um, um, uh, uh, a process and, uh, as somebody who has, in his career, sat on the school side in Cambridge and developed budgets and on the city side, uh, and developed budgets in Cambridge as well as, uh, in Belmont and Arlington, I think there, there's a lot of ingredients in the stew, and I think, uh, the outcome for all of us is

to have a, uh, stew that tastes good.

So, I think we, uh, look forward to hearing from the council, but I think we appreciate the fact that the co, co-chairs have set the framework in terms of, uh, expectations. So, thank you. And then now, co-chairs would be happy to have you kick off the meeting. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, uh, City Manager, and Assistant City Manager, and Director Jennings. Um, once again, I just want to reiterate, this is in the spirit of ensuring that you hear there's lots of ways of input, but there haven't been as coordinated, kind of comprehensive as, as--

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: Excuse me, Councillor Nolan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yes.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: I'm, I'm, I may-- and I've turned every gizmo I have on my machine. Is there a way you can speak a little--I'm having a little hard time hearing you. And, and again, I will--huh?

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Is that better?

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: Much better. I, I just--I didn't want to have my face right against the

screen trying to look, so I appreciate that.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: All right, well, I'll have to, I'll have to talk to the city about this headset they provided.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: We'll, we'll be able to return that to RadioShack.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. I'll--we'll, we'll, might have to add that to the budget, better head, headsets. Um, yeah, so I appreciate that. And to remind all of us, we are sincere in that I do think it's important to have a coordinated set of input. And my first term on the council, my first year, there was concern over the budget. The, the real desire of the, the council as a whole to have the feasibility study for municipal broadband to be funded was not quite as evident until we, in the budget process, made it very clear by having to vote against part of the budget.

So that's the kind of thing I don't want to have happened later on. I think it's important to identify if there's that kind of really, uh, important issue, let's get it out on the table earlier. On the other hand, as both the City Manager, and Mr. Kale, and Mr. Jennings said, we are

already along in the process, and yet they--this is our opportunity to, to both hear the good things, right? We know a lot of the things in the budget are there. We have doubled the amount of money spent on affordable housing.

So anyway, I will stop talking, you've already heard from me. I will use the hand function if, uh, as councillors want to, um, join in either physically or metaphorically raise your hand. I see Vice Mayor Mallon.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Oh, thank you, Madam Chair through you, and thanks for pulling this meeting together. Um, it's funny doing the city manager search process right now. And some of the comments, um, that I've received from our executive search firm was they were shocked that actually right now and in March, we weren't bogged down with finance committee meetings around the budget. And that, in their experience and the other communities they've worked with, that has been the time where people--like the council and the manager and the finance team are actually doing that work.

So, um, you know, I, I appreciate that, um, we have a lot of vehicles to develop, I think that's what Mr. Kale said. We have a lot of ve, vehicles to develop the budget.

However, we see this in May, and it's done. And, you know, we ask our questions, but at the end of the day, we either get to say yes or no, and if we say no, right? It's, it's considered a really, like a, a very challenging thing to do. Um, you know, we are saying no to a budget. I think, you know, Councillor Nolan brought up the point where we said, you know, no to a budget, and we were told, you know, 40 people are gonna lose their jobs, right?

Like, we're, I think I am surprised at the defensive stance of the finance team and the manager just for having this conversation. Um, I see it as an opportunity for us to have a more collaborative upfront conversation while, you know, while the budget is being developed. And I do wonder, like, would we see less policy orders if we had more formalized vehicles to have these conversations before we get to the budget?

So I do want us to like level set the conversation and try to maintain a non-defensive stance right now because I think it's important. And like I said, we are--I've been talking to a lot of people in the past couple of weeks around the city manager search and people's hopes for the relationship between the council, the manager, and the

administration. And I think what I'm hearing from a lot of people is that they would like there to be a lot more collaborative work.

So, I'm really taking that to heart. I'm hoping that we can have a collaborative conversation here. I'm hoping that we can start these conversations earlier and, and be a team, right? I, we're a team. We're a team for the City of Cambridge, for the residents and stakeholders of, of Cambridge. Um, so all that being said, I really want to, I want to thank the co-chairs, um, for pulling this together. And I want to thank the, the team at the city for, for having this conversation, and for committing to having this conversation.

I think one of the, one of the things, um, that struck me about Mr. Kale and, and Mr. Jennings, your, um, presentation was, her budget has gone from 2013, \$488 million to, 2022, it's gonna be \$748 million. That's a huge, that's like almost exponential growth in our budget.

What, what I think I would like to know is, and maybe this is just a larger sort of, what I would like to know, is how are we looking at programs, current existing programs and evaluating them, right? Because our employees

right now are, are saying, we, we are, we have been taking on too many things. We've been taking on too many things, and like, it's just adding, adding, adding on and on. And I want to be thoughtful about what we're taking off, right? And what are, like Councillor Nolan said, like, where are those places that we are, we are really looking at and taking out of the budget so that we can be more creative or we can do something different?

I, I just want us to think about those things and, um, I'm not sure if this is the vehicle to do that, but like, how do we as a council and as a city think about programs that have existed forever that maybe need to be revamped or be, um, we, we need to stop doing that program and we need to bring something fresh on, right?

Like, there's a lot of things for us to think about here, and I think at this point, I'm just rambling, but those are some preliminary thoughts. I'm gonna, I'm gonna yield the floor at this time, but I, I, I hope that we can move forward on this in a very collaborative way and think about the budget as a document of our values, um, and how to use the exponential growth that we have seen to ensure that it's still reflective of our values. So, thank you.

Um, Co-Chair Nolan, I'll yield back.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Vice Mayor Mallon. Uh, I have, if the order is--on the screen is, uh, Councillor Zondervan, Councillor McGovern, and then Mayor Siddiqui. Councillor Zondervan.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you. Looks like we have an echo. Um, I think I'm gonna have to move out of the chamber coz I'm having an echo. I'll defer.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Okay. Councillor, you can maybe try muting the, your Zoom and then talking into the mic.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: I, I'll try muting the microphone. Testing, testing. Okay, that works. Thanks for the suggestion.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Turn on your mic.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: I did. Can you, can you hear me? No?

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Do we have that loop technology in city hall in the budget?

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Is, is this working? Can you hear me? No?

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: You're muted though,

Councillor Zondervan. Oh.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: So, I'm not sure exactly what the format is for the meeting, but I, I do have a couple of specific questions if that's in order to ask now.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yes.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Great. Thank you, Ma'am Chair. So, through you and, you know, certainly I think we could, um, consider tweaking the goals, but I'm, I'm not sure we're gonna do that here, so, so I'll just ask my questions about some priorities that I think in--so far haven't been sufficiently addressed in the, in the budget.

So, so one is around racial justice and as you know, um, Councillor Simmons and Councillor Nolan and I introduced last term, several policy orders around, um, creating a racial justice and equity commission, as well as beginning, uh, the process of reparations for slavery and for the war on drugs, uh, starting with the cannabis revenues. So, is, is there any update on, on that? Can, can you give me any sense of, uh, through you, Madam Chair, whether that will be reflected in the upcoming budget?

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: I would just leave it.

Anyone--if, if a--with this back and forth, if anyone from the city has any kind of answer, whether it's a, I--is the protocol that I'm supposed to call on someone or just defer to--

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: I, I, I guess could you speak more loudly into the microphone, Councillor? Coz I really didn't hear the question.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Sure. I am, uh, speaking as close to the mic as I can. Um, I put, we put in the policy order last term around racial justice, um, specifically creating a racial justice and equity commission, as well as beginning, uh, reparations efforts for both slavery and the war on drugs using cannabis revenues. So I'm just asking if there's any updates you can give us on those efforts.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Let me suggest that, that if these are questions for which the city staff doesn't have ready answers, obviously you can all respond, the idea would be that, write them down and then we'll, we will meet, uh, counc--Co-Chair Councillor Carlone and I can meet with the city staff. I forgot the best way to get it back to the council. There could be a communication.

But obviously, if you have the answers, fine. But some of this, since this is a, a relatively new format that you may be throwing questions that you don't have the answers to, that would be understandable. And then--but let's make sure we write them down documents so that we can get some-- at least a, a, a reply to the extent that we can. So, is this one we don't have a reply for? Looks--

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: Again, I, I guess, um, as I understand the format of today's meeting, it was to listen to the council about areas that they would like to bring forward for consideration. Obviously, it was a policy order. Um, you know, I will tell you if the funding's coming from cannabis, there is not, uh, at this point we've opened our first cannabis, uh, facility, so, uh, the tax revenue has not been actualized.

And, um, um, I, I--and I, I can't even, again, that's why I think Councillor Nolan and Councillor Carlone are wise to have an inventory of listing because, um, obviously it's not just a budgetary request, it also has other, um, implications with regard to, uh, uh, the law office and the likes. So, I, I wouldn't feel comfortable answering it because I don't have enough information to give you a, um,

uh, credible answer. And I think, I think the format today was to listen to what the requests are and then I guess, uh, determine what we're gonna do. But I think if we, um, um, try to answer each one, I think it's gonna be, um, not as productive as I think the co-chairs may have envisioned.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Right, right. To be clear, this was, the call is considered the council goals in relation to the budget. So, it's very much what budget and gather input and discuss priorities on the budget as it relates to the goals with the idea that everything comes back to the goals. However, understandably, that specific a question would not be something the staff would've been prepared for. Um, but it's on the table now.

Councillor Zondervan, did you have, have other either input or, uh, something to convey about, uh, the budget as it relates to any of the city goals, which are quite extensive, obviously, the City Council goals?

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you, Ma'am Chair. And, and through you, I, I do, uh, appreciate that this is, uh, a very specific question and I, I do apologize. Again, I'm not, I wasn't entirely clear on, on the format of, of this meeting, but I really appreciate,

um, that this meeting's being held. It, it's, um, quite, uh, unprecedented and, and really great step in the right direction that we are having this conversation. So, I, I do understand that the staff may not have ready answers and so I, I'm just, you know, gonna raise these points and if, if there are answers, great, and if not, uh, I understand that.

So other priorities that are in my mind are, um, municipal broadband and, and digital equity and how that's reflected in the budget. Um, funding for The H.E.A.R.T. Program, which I know is an ongoing conversation, uh, with the manager and, uh, after school pre-K and, and youth programs and how that's reflected in the budget.

And then coming up, it's not, um, we, we're discussing a, a green jobs ordinance. It's just been introduced, but, um, that would have budgetary implications as well. So again, just want to put that on the table. And then of course, um, affordable housing is, is always the big one. And specifically, again, there was a, a policy order last term that I put in with Councillor Simmons on a house, housing bond for affordable home ownership. And I don't know if there's any update on that or any new information

that, that we should know about, uh, from the staff, but, but if not, I, I understand that as well. Thank you, Ma'am Chair.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Councillor Zondervan. And, and as said before, this is really to gather input if the staff wants to respond to anything. Uh, great. And certainly if, if you know some of these, these answers, it'd be great to know now. Some of what is hopefully going to come out of this is a sense of what are the various priorities that the council is outlining and, and, and how in time hopefully to understand how they're related to the budget.

Again, we heard that the budget's already underway, but it's, it's not finalized yet. And the idea is to, is to understand where our priorities are. So I will now, um, Councillor McGovern and then Mayor Siddiqui.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you, Madam Co-Chair. Um, so I mean, I, I, you know, I--we're not really supposed to list off, you know, projects or, or, or, or things that we want to see. So, you know, in, in general, I mean, obviously the goals that the council has are goals that I agree with. You know, investing more in affordable

housing, investing more in, uh, uh, in issues around, um, income insecurity and inequity and, and, uh, early childhood education and homelessness, all the things that, you know, folks have talked about.

Um, uh, is there, um, Mr. Kale had mentioned, and, and, and, uh, I think the manager had mentioned also that, you know, we had, that the council had set this goal about increasing the amount of money put towards affordable housing and that, and that we've done that. Um, is there plans in this budget? Can we anticipate, uh, seeing that grow more? Or have we said, well, you know, we set this goal for 30 mil, you know, \$30 million, we've reached it and we're just gonna fund it level funded, or are we looking at adding more money? Um, obviously the cost of building housing and acquiring property continues to go up, not down. So, we're gonna need more and more, uh, financial support. So, is that something we can anticipate seeing?

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: The, the allocation that we have for our affordable housing comes from three pots of money, uh, general fund property taxes, building permit revenues, um, and, uh, community preservation. So, um, there will be an increase in, in the

base amount that we've reached, which, uh, uh, Todd, correct me if off the top \$28 million. So yes, based upon those parameters, um, we, we will see an increase in, uh, the amount that we had, uh, over above fiscal '22.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. Uh, and then lastly, just, you know, food for thought for the future, obviously, you know, it's a little late in this cycle, but I think, you know, two things that we might want to consider, uh, a, as we think about this budget process. One, you know, it might be helpful if during the--leading up to, you know, seeing, I mean, we, we all see the budget when everybody else sees the budget, right?

So, we're all kind of sitting with baited breath as well. And, and so I think there's some, you know, I, I think there's some uncomfortableness around that for us, uh, on the council, I certainly don't want to speak for everybody, but you know, we have people who are reaching out to us in the community who are saying, "What about this, what about that?" And we don't, don't have real answers for them until the budget comes out publicly.

So maybe one thing we can think about moving forward is, you know, getting some updates, you know, from the city

of, you know, here are some things that are on the table, here are some things, something that at least allows us information that we can then provide back to the community when we get asked those questions. Cause there's nothing worse, I think, for any of us that when we get asked a question and we don't have an answer or we don't have a way to direct somebody or a place to necessarily even find out that answer because we're the ones that people look to.

So maybe some summaries or some updates or, you know, some kind of communication from the city, um, as to, you know, different things that are on the table and being talked about. Um, because we file lots of policy orders and some make them to the point of getting into the budget, and some are still waiting on an awaiting reports list. And so, you know, we never know what's being considered or what's not, you know, for the budget. So that might be helpful so that we have more information.

And then secondly, I don't know if there's a role for some of the other committees besides finance to, you know, engage in some conversation. You know, as the chair of human services, you know, traditionally, it has never been done, and I don't know if it's appropriate to be done. I

think it probably--it could be, um, you know, to sit down and have a human services meeting with the Department of Human Services and say, "What are your fund, what are your budget priorities this year? What are you thinking about? Here are some things that I'm hearing from the community." Because those conversations, you know, don't happen. And if they do, they certainly don't happen in public. So, you know, maybe there's also another way we can think next year is to using our other committees to engage in some of this conversation and, and, and get some feedback.

And, and, um, I know it's a leap of faith, you know, because I do think, I, I do hear the city manager and I tend to agree with the city manager that, um, you know, we focus so much on what we're not doing rather than what we are doing, and I think that can be, sometimes those conversations get, uh, they're very difficult and I think staff can feel, um, depleted, you know, uh, at times. And, and, and I think we have to be mindful of that. Um, so I, I, I, I get it. I, um, you know, that this is, this would be a new way of doing things in the city, and that's hard. But I do think we have to figure out something where we're just not getting the budget in May, and we are as surprised

as everybody else as to what's in it and what's not in it.

Um, it just, it, it sets up this conflict every year where, "Are we gonna vote for the budget, or we not gonna vote for the budget? Are we gonna do this or do that?" And part of that is because we don't really have much input directly leading up to seeing the budget when it's 99% done. Um, and so we gotta--we do have to figure out a way of, of doing this a little bit, a little bit better, um, to avoid the pain at the end.

So, um, thank you to the Co-Chairs. Thank you, everybody, for your presentations. Um, you know, I think you all know my priorities at this point, I talk about 'em all the time. So, um, I hope to see, uh, I hope to see some funds going to those issues. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, uh, Councillor McGovern. Yes, as, as one of the leaders of the last time, there's uncomfortable conversations around the feasibility study that's, um, we all want to get to the place where, as Vice Mayor said earlier, that we understand, um, that's going forward.

I believe the Mayor had held her hand up, I'm not sure if she still wants to talk next. And then after the Mayor

maybe, uh, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Yes. Thank you. Um, yeah, I, I appreciate all the comments that, uh, my colleagues have brought up, uh, so far. I think, you know, three, just a few things that stick out to me. You know, I think we do do more than most cities because look at our exponential growth. Um, no other city, you know, I've worked in Lawrence, Lowell, and Lynn, and I think we have it really easy in Cambridge in some respects, um, where, you know, we, um, don't have to make necessarily tough, tough decisions as other cities have to make, um, because of the growth that we have.

And so thinking about all the growth, um, and I brought this up a few times, uh, in the last few years, just the tenant displacement that is being caused by this growth, it's, it's, you know, it's enabling us to have the budget that we do, and, um, it makes us think about what else, uh, what other--the needs are. And for me, what comes to mind is I really, we appre--appreciate that we've continued to fund HomeBridge and increase that amount.

I'm--I appreciate that there's this lottery coming up for St. James and Inman place. I'd like to see more housing

ownership units and just want to get the copy add in there. There, there is a policy order from last term. I'm just evaluating those programs too, because I think that needs to be done. Um, but I think we, all we hear is, you know, it's really hard to stay here. How do I stay here? And, you know, I, I, I think policy, you know, is something that is somewhat in our control, but it seems like we do have this budget that, you know, maybe we, we, we, you know, we, we, we need to, uh, use the goals, continue to put more money into affordable housing, into a lot of the areas.

I'd love to see, you know, a huge resource from my office is a multi-service center. And, um, everything that they do there, and I, I think, you know, you know, increasing the amount of support that they have, um, is key. You know, and the work that Moree's office, uh, through the--does is really--and Sylvia, I'd love to see more support there.

Um, and even the fund, I know--Ellen knows much more about this than I do, but the Rich Rossi fund that existed, that money, you know, the amount that we give to people now, if they're for the first month's run, there's, uh, you know, other funds for, for families at risk of

homelessness.

I think those amounts should always, we need to increase those amounts given what's happening with inflation, given how much harder it is now than it was two years ago. So that amount directly to helping residents, I want that to go up. Um, anyway, I'll stop there. I--these are just some of the things where I'd love to see in this year's budget, how we're doing that and how we're actively targeting issues like tenant displacement. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Mayor Siddiqui. Next, I have, uh, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone, and then Councillor Toner.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Thank you, co-chair. Uh, uh, I'll hold until, uh, Councillor Toner speaks. He hasn't had a chance to speak yet, I have.

COUNCILLOR PAUL F. TONER: Thank you, Councillor Carlone, uh, Madam Co-chair. Uh, we, we've talked about, uh, the goals seem to reflect a lot of outputs and, um, you know, people have talked about some of the outputs. I'm, I'm most concerned about the, the inputs, and I want to make sure that what we do in our budget and our services,

and, you know, what the city is focused on, is also just the economic growth and supporting small businesses, uh, stabilizing or maintaining stability for residential property taxes, um, to help people, especially, uh, the more senior, uh, residents stay in their homes. Um, maintaining the quality and access to the services we have, you know, as a city, we do provide many, many services and programs that no other city can possibly provide.

I, uh, I completely agree with, uh, Vice Mayor Mallon's comment about, I, I would love us to, you know, whether it's, uh, creating our own, uh, congressional budget office or something that examines programs and what the return on investment is. Is this the best way to go about trying to accomplish those particular goals? Or is there a, is there a, uh, uh, repetitiveness? I mean, I know we have lots of programs. Are they in silos? You know, are they working most, uh, ef--effectively and efficiently together? Uh, and, you know, with non-profits, uh, that we have in the city?

So those are some of the things I definitely wanted to focus on. Um, just on the goals, you know, not having been here when they were created, not that I want to open this

can of worms, but maybe, uh, I, I hope we do get a chance to have a, a council retreat where we can all just, uh, talk. Uh, because when I look at the goals, there are 12 of them and they are pretty broad, um, and they're all, you know, important. Um, but it's also, uh, because of the way they're written it, it might be difficult to measure, you know, how much we've accomplished in those particular areas. So maybe trying to figure out some benchmarks that, that we want to, um, highlight. Thank you. I yield.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Councillor Toner. You know how many times have you heard me talk about smart goals and these aren't super smart. Um, next, uh, since, uh, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone will wait, it's, uh, Councillor Simmons.

COUNCILLOR DENISE E. SIMMONS: Thank you, uh, through the Chairs. Uh, the finance conversation is always an interesting one. Uh, I don't have to add, I don't have anything to add, per se in terms of particular interest, my, uh, because I realize it is a city manager's budget, not the council's budget. And, you know, as we have these conversations going out--going forward, uh, this is a conversation that certainly if we're in earnest about

doing, we might want to start in November, cause that's when the city manager really starts to prepare his budget and work with his department.

So it kind of supports something that my colleague Councillor Toner has said, and we've done in the past, uh, and, and that is having those retreat training moments so that we can have a conversation about what we want to do as a council, how's that, that what we want to do as a council figures into goals, and then how those goals are measured so that we see that we're going to be doing, we're on the right track.

There's something that Dr. Greer said at the School Committee hearing that I was, I thought was extraordinarily important, is that we--to be careful not to do too much just because we have funds, let's make sure we use our funds in a way that's really gonna make the impact that we want, and of course, that's revisiting the goals. And as many people here know that our goals, we've been establishing goals are--well be, I think, well before I even got here.

And so, uh, Councillor Toner is--makes a very good point, and to remind us that, you know, maybe at the start

of every term, we make sure, and this usually happens through government Ops, that we revisit our goals to make sure they're still a, a aligned to what we see as the city's, um, interest and needs and using, uh, in parts, the information we get from, uh, the firm that does, uh, the citizen survey so that our goals are lining up with what we know and hear in the community, but also what we get from opinion dynamics, I think it's what they call themselves, uh, and make sure that's all working in the, in the same, uh, same vein.

So, I, I certainly do appreciate the work of the city manager and his fiscal team. Uh, I know sometimes people might feel frustrated because of the constraints of the type of government we have, which doesn't, uh, have us be as hands on as the school, uh, committee is on their budget. But it's still, there's ways for us to work in this context in cooperation with the city manager and his staff to make sure that the budget certainly, um, identifies, represents our interests.

The only thing I would like to speak about specifically to the budget, um, is the budget style. And I've said this in early, uh, earlier meetings. One of the

things that we speak a lot about, and we know that really makes a difference in what we do in the city is how well we work in reaching out to the community.

So, as the budget is developed, in terms of the printed document, I would love to see--outline the community engagement pieces stand out in a way, either in its own separate section, coz right now you have to pull it out of every section. I feel the same way around our diversity and equity racial justice work. It's embedded in departments, but it would really be good to see those pulled out in such a way so we can really see, you know, how we are impacting those issues that we say as a progressive leaning city that are important to us.

So, again, um, we live in an extraordinary time. Uh, we have, we have the finances to do extraordinary things in our city, and even think about new and innovative things to do. So, uh, I look forward to this year's budget process. I enjoyed sharing it with Councillor Carlone in, in the past. And I just know that we will do an extraordinary job, um, in making sure that our budget looks at and, and exemplifies what that, that--what it is we see ourselves doing for our citizens.

And, uh, I, I know that the city manager's coming to the end of his term, so I certainly want to acknowledge the work that he has done in the city as a fiscal manager all these years, and then as, um, the city manager making sure that we spend our dollars well. I yield the floor.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Councillor Simmons. Um, maybe we can have some kind of matrix online where you can have the budget by department, but also by category of goals on, coz the points you made were directly related to the goals of the City Council. Um, Councillor Azeem is next and hasn't spoken, and then we'll go back around again. Councillor Azeem.

COUNCILLOR BURHAN AZEEM: Thank you, um, uh, uh, Madam Chair. Um, I just wanted to add a few additional thoughts as just, um, ideas to throw out there. I'm very willing to defer, um, to, uh, you know, uh, uh, the city manager and the budget that he creates in a lot of ways. Um, I want to say like my following comments are more as like suggestions to think about, not necessarily things that, um, necessarily will be the best input, but just things to consider.

Um, I think the few things that come to mind for me

are like checking for like longer term investments in like high risk scenarios. Um, you know, if we had thought about like the pandemic two years ago, thinking about investing in pandemic readiness would've seemed kind of silly in that no one thought that a pandemic was coming. Um, and so I think that thinking about like longer term, low out, like low likelihood, but high impact, um, uh, events is something I'm particularly interested in.

Um, yeah, you know, just a few thoughts off the top of my head is like, um, I, especially, I'm concerned around like flooding, especially in, um, you know, north of Harvard Square, also in the Alewife region. Um, I know that we have normal levels of rain where, um, in some of our big, biggest storms, it can feel like you're like chest deep in water on some of our streets. And I know we've done a lot around like our sewers and other places to invest in this. But, you know, things like that I think I'm very interested in, in like, um, uh, low risk events.

And then the second is like, I think that, um, you know, there's two ways to offer like better services, uh, in that like, A, you can offer more services, or B, you can like, uh, do them better. And part of that is like having

materials and better resources, uh, but also is like, uh, like city staff. And, um, I'm just like, um, very interested in making sure, especially in a year with high inflation, uh, but also in general that we have like competitive pay, uh, for city staff and making sure that we can attract really brilliant people from, um, both like, uh, you know, uh, who are interested in these sorts of careers and make it like affordable, especially in a city like Cambridge, which has high, um, living costs. Um, I yield at per.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: To Councillor Azeem. Now, will, um, everyone, uh, uh, uh, councillor has, has spoken, so we'll go around again. What I have in order is I'll say something, I didn't really talk about some of the priorities and then if the hand's raised are still being raised in order, it was, uh, Councillor Carlone, uh, Councillor Toner, Councillor Simmons, then Councillor McGovern.

I'll just add a couple of things. I didn't mention specific areas, no surprise to anyone given all the work of the last long time is that, I do hope that we are developing a, um, a very clear strategy and funding

strategy to address the climate emergency and environmental justice. It's something that is in, it's a, a very clear one in our, our goals about deepen our commitment to sustainability, use of energy, and certainly the equity issues around the, the climate crisis run through every single one of our other goals.

And whatever the city can do, I know that as, as you all know, there's a, there's a lot of work on this. The Climate Crisis Working Group has, uh, identified funding and, and equity as, you know, highlights of something we should consider. It's not something that this budget would change dramatically, but certainly ensuring that we are in a position and moving towards a position, if it really truly is the emergency and the crisis that COVID was and that affordable housing was, then there should be a commensurate effort, um, in terms of funding.

Um, whether it's ensuring that every low-income resident renter or owner could install a heat pump, you know, to jumpstart the, the, the state's efforts at, uh, ensuring that more people can be in a situation where they are safe. And as Councillor Azeem just mentioned, there's a lot of the issues of climate mitigation that are, are

affecting all of the, the city residents.

Some of the others who already have at the round table on universal preschool, there's certainly something there that, that that funding is something that has continued to increase. I know we're gonna get in some reports and maybe all children are already covered, but they're certainly not covered with the city fully funded program for all four-year old's. Um, and I think we all were pretty consistent in saying that's something we expect to see sooner rather than later.

And the tree canopy and open space, just having gotten word of yet another glorious huge tree, um, being taken down, uh, due to, due to just circumstances, it's something that, particularly other parts of the city, not where I live there even, I don't have that many trees, but certainly other parts of the city have even less that that's, again, is an environmental justice and, and we're doing a lot there.

So, to address part of what the city manager said, we all recognize there's a lot, and I certainly have been one of the ones to say we, we are doing a tremendous amount of work and it's setting us up to say, how is it as we move

forward that we can meet the goals that we have established? And we're meeting many of them. And I think back to the Vice Mayor's point, let's all take it on ourselves as we move forward to understand where's the accountability and the measuring and the understanding of, there are programs that may have been started but need to be adjusted.

And maybe they were even the appropriate programs that a certain amount of time and are not yet are, are, are no longer ones that maybe we should be investing as, as, as fully in. And maybe there's even staff if two-thirds of our funding is staff, maybe staff could be redirected towards a, a, a somewhat different goal.

So, it's, it's not even saying we would add and expect \$50 million to appear, but more like, can we reallocate both staff time and monies within our current budget? So those are the, the couple that, um, I hope to see and have an expectation that, again, not that it will be solved in this budget, that we'll be moving towards a really comprehensive plan, particularly on the climate emergency and environmental justice.

So, again, I, I had, uh, Councillor Carlone, uh, I

know had wanted to say something again. And, and then Councillor McGovern is what I see.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: So for the--thank you Co-Chair, uh, Nolan. For the future, as we discussed, um, the process begins in the fall for the staff. So that tells me we should begin our meetings discussing priorities in September for it to mean something. Is, is that correct, uh, Mr. Kale or Mr. Jennings?

BUDGET DIRECTOR TAHA JENNINGS: I mean, I I would say budgeting really is year-round, uh, for the city. I mean, whether it's monitoring things. So, we're taking input throughout and, you know, trying to, if we're trying to build a framework, I mean, this helps, but in terms of yes, you know, I, at least the fall, I would say.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Okay, so pre, preferably the beginning of the fiscal year planning for the next fiscal year. And I don't think priorities are gonna be that dramatic. The list I had where I feel we're underfunding, we've all talked about these, there's no surprises here. Preschool, public open space, housing for the unhoused, food, environmental prep, and road safety. Um, there are no surprises there. It's just that if you

compare 'em to other areas, these are areas that should be looked at. And I, you know, people could say, "We do so much. Why do you dr, drag these issues up?"

We're in a unique financial position. I realize we want to keep taxes low, but we're not as, uh, the Mayor said, we're not Lawrence. And, and I've worked in Lawrence and I've worked with that staff. I understand. But, um, if we don't talk about where we're lacking, we're always going to lack there. And, uh, it's not a criticism about everything else, it's saying, "All right, how can we improve?"

Um, I think it would be helpful on the yearly increase to also have inflation. Uh, some years inflation was low. This last year, we don't even make up for inflation. I believe it's 7% or 5.7%. We're close to that in our in, increase. And so, the, the real increases, what is in addition to inflation as far as productivity, I think that would help in the future.

Um, if you include inflation, we didn't really increase the budget that much. Yes, monetarily we did, but real money, you can question it. I'm not, and again, I'm not fighting what you're doing, I'm just, we're having a

discussion.

In the end, the council's responsibility is to review the budget as Councillor McGovern said, and we don't get it until, you know, like a month before approval, and it's thicker than my phone book. Um, and knowing where we're going would be helpful in, in areas and areas that we're not spending money.

And as far as, uh, a number of people have talked about examining existing programs, there are consultants who help with that. They're at the National League of Cities every year giving a lecture, and I've done it twice and have recommended them in the past and they work with staff. Um, so it's not like this is impossible. Um, and we're not asking for dramatic changes, but we want some areas to be beefed up. Um, and I hope people don't take that as an attack on what you've done. We're doing our job just like you are doing your job, and this is normal discussion and any budget where somebody has to approve it.

Um, so I'll stop there, but if we don't talk about where we're lacking, we're not doing our job. And that's why I brought it up. That wasn't a criticism, is let's focus on this in the future. Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone. Uh, Councillor McGovern.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank, thank you. Um, just a quick, uh, you know, not to hate to dump more work on, on Taha and, and, and others, but, you know, one of the things that I, I've talked about in the past, and I think we may have done a little bit of this in the last budget, so if I'm, if you're already doing this and I just forget, um, correct me. Um, but we have so many, uh, there's so much crossover between different departments that support different things.

So I remember sort of talking about, you know, on School Committee when we would talk about how much the school department budget is, I would always remind people that in addition to the school department budget, there's like \$9 million out of the Department of Human Services that goes directly to the schools. And then there's the health department budget that funds the nurses. And really that budget is a lot larger than even what the school department gets in, in that budget.

And I wonder if there's a way to capture that to really give a full picture to the public of what we're

actually spending and what we're actually doing. Cause I think we're actually missing the opportunity to tell a great story. You know, it's not just, you know, we're giving the school department X amount of dollars, but there's all these other city departments, I mean, just as an example, all these other city departments that are also supporting our young people in the schools. Um, and that goes for all kinds of things, right? There's, you know, there's money in the police department budget that is going to things that collaborate with the Department of Human Services to support, you know, our homeless population or other populations, you know.

So I don't know if there's a way to capture that or, or to share that. Not to make--Councillor Carlone's right, the budget is already a, uh, a Yellow Pages for those folks who remember Yellow Pages. Um, so I'm not looking to make it a ton longer, but, um, I think we're missing an opportunity to really tell, I think a really good story in terms of how much support we are actually putting in places cause it's also siloed in, in the budget and it's really hard for people to sort of cross, cross reference all that information. So, just my two cents. Um, thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Councillor McGovern. Um, yes, maybe a review of the communication on the budget. Uh, Vice Mayor Mallon.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'm not sure if this is an appropriate time to be having this sort of conversation, but I, I do wonder since we have the manager and the budget team on and many of our department heads, is there an opportunity for us to hear any of the kind of highlights that are being considered?

I know department heads are having their meetings right now with, um, with the manager and the budget department, but, um, I think it's always helpful-- I mean, even when we saw the ARPA, uh, memo a few months back when it was like, just the buckets of things that people are con, uh, that the city's considering or we could be considering.

Is, is there an opportunity for us right now to hear about some highlights of some maybe exciting things that are gonna be in the budget that, um, align with our goals and we've been talking about?

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: That is an excellent idea. I'm not sure if the city would do that, but to, uh,

City Manager DePasquale or Assistant City Manager Kale, if any, and any of the department heads here, if anyone wants to weigh in. I, I don't--the Vice Mayor's--

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: I, I, I get, and I, I hear your question, I really do. I guess I want to say that we are putting the budget together and we haven't made final decisions. And so, for us to sort of list the things that might be on the table, that may not be on the table is probably not a prudent way to proceed.

So, I, I, again, I think we're, we're, um, we're formulating that, and I guess I would not want to put all of us in a position to talk about something that ends up not being funded or frankly things that are still being considered.

So, I, I guess I, I hear the question, um, I understand it and I think manager obviously can weigh in, but I think you probably would not serve you and the departments at this point to talk about things that haven't been finalized. Mr. Manager?

CITY MANAGER LOUIS A. DEPASQUALE: I would just support what Mr. Kale said. There are a lot of large budgets that have not been heard yet. So as we formulate

the budget, it's still kind of early to give examples of where we're going.

I think what I will say is what we've done for 40 years, since I've been involved in budgeting, we've listened to what the council priorities are, we've listened to what we feel our residents need, and the budget's being developed that way, working with department heads to strategize on how we can best reflect the goals of the City Council. And that's the way we've done about it and that's the way we continue to go about it this year.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the manager and to Mr. Kale. I mean, I think that's, it's, it makes it hard to have this conversation then, right? It makes it really hard to have a conversation about priorities when we're just telling you what our priorities are, and we're not, we're not necessarily feeling that reflected back, um, by the team. And I, I understand, right? Like this is a hard conversation to have and maybe it's like a, a shift in culture. Um, but there is a level of trust and collaboration that I, I'm, I don't think we have right now.

Um, and I think that, that, that's really, that's

hard. That's a hard conversation that we're having right now. And I think we should be having hard conversations, right? And that's okay. Uh, it's, it's okay to have hard conversations and we're having one right now.

Um, but you know, I think it would be really nice to hear, "Here are some of the great things we're really thinking about with our departments that reflect back on, you know, these--" We know that it's a priority of yours to, um, to really increase home ownership. And so, we are really taking a hard look at like what we're, where we're placing those dollars and the program, you know, we're like thinking about a, a program revamp.

I mean, we don't, I know that Mr. Kale said earlier, we have a lot of, a lot of vehicles to develop the budget. And I guess I'm, what I'm feeling right now is maybe we have this meeting and it is also a vehicle, but it's not moving the conversation forward. So I want us to try to figure out--I know this is our first time doing this, uh, but I really want us to figure out a way to do it in a way that's like collaborative and full of trust and um, respectful.

And, you know, I certainly, my, myself, I, I don't, I

don't want to speak for my colleagues, but I understand that there are certain, like, you're not gonna say, well, we're funding HomeBridge at an additional \$11.5 million in the budget, coz that's not appropriate at this point. But like high level, I think we, we could and should be having these conversations. That's the point of like having earlier budget conversations and to Councillor Simmons' point, having this conversation in November doesn't change that, right? Like it just changes the timeline. Maybe that's more of a priorities and goals conversation. And then when it gets closer, it's like, 'All right, well here's what we're hearing from our department heads. Um, here's what we heard from you.'

So, uh, that's, I, I don't know if the, the manager has a response to that, but I, that--those are--it's hard to have this conversation if we're not talking about, um, what might be coming forward.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: I, I would say, just in fairness to the co-chairs, I think when this meeting was devised, I think it was meant to be more of a listening session. So frankly, we, um, came to this meeting trying to share information and hear what you are all

saying, but I don't think we were asked to consider those kinds of things. And so frankly, I would never want to do anything like that off the top of our heads. So, I guess, um, that really was--the focus of the agenda may be a little bit different than what you just said, to be honest.

CITY MANAGER LOUIS A. DEPASQUALE: And, and, and for you Madam Chair, I, I, I guess I'm not being clear enough or maybe people just don't believe what I'm saying. We spend the first half hour of every budget here, how does it reflect the council goals? So that is the manager responding to the council's goals. And I think the budget reflects that. There is issues where nine councillors can have nine different goals and therefore it is difficult for us to make every goal of every City Council.

But if you look at the budget where priorities have been since I've been in the budget director, there's always been and tried to work with the council goals. So, I, I don't know what else to say that we understand that, the department heads work hard on that, and if that message isn't cleared, then that's on me, I guess.

But it, it's not the budget staff's issue, it's not the department has issues coz they've gone out of their way

to develop budgets to show how important we think it is to listen to the council. Then that doesn't mean we're gonna fund everything in a budget, but it does mean that we're gonna address concerns like affordable housing, which we've done. I mean this is the, the budget for years ago was the first budget in the history of the city since rent control to put property taxes towards affordable housing. And that was done based on the city manager listening to City Councils.

So, I just, yeah, I can get a little defensive because I just don't think we hear or we're getting our point across enough on how much attention department heads, who gonna be incredibly frustrated hearing this, spend attempting to develop their budget to reflect what the council--we believe the council wants to say.

Now, that doesn't mean we're gonna put millions and millions in every category, but I don't know how else to say, you know, Taha spends incredible time before the budget even gets to me to say, "How are we sure this is gonna reflect council goals?" And I think that's the role of the council when working with the manager. And we've tried to do that and--I mean, this is a new format, it's a

new meeting and I don't think we're trying to be defensive, we're trying to be honest to say, "How this fits in our current budget process, I'm not sure."

And I can say that I said that very respectfully to both Councillor Nolan and Councillor Carlone when I heard about it. I think it's a good idea, but it's uncharted waters and we're not gonna have all the answers. And I think we're trying, but we don't at this point in time have all the answers because the budget's still in a working stage.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Uh, may I respond, Councillor?

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Of course.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Oh, thank you for that. Um, and of course I think what you're hearing from me and I, my, maybe my colleagues too, we're not privy to those conversations that you're saying every, you know, every, every conversation starts out with how is this reflecting on councillors? We're not privy to those conversations that we don't get the, the budget until May like everybody else.

So it is hard for us to know, and I think this is what we're trying to do in this meeting and developing these

meetings, is trying to figure out how to create a not a black box between what I know and you are saying happens. And I hope that every single department head on this call understands that we know how hard you work to develop your budgets in relationship to our, the council's goals, which is reflective of the residents.

So I just want to make that really clear and I think it, it stresses the importance of why we should be having this conversations, um, because obviously we, we need to be having them. And like I said before, I think we need to be having these difficult conversations and I think it's, it's our role, right, is to like try to figure this out. So, I'll yield back at this time. Um, thank you Madam Chair.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Vice Mayor Mallon. And I, I know passions run high. What I want to remind us all of, and I know--all the councillors respect all the city department heads, the city manager, the budget staff, what I see, it's a little bit schizoid. So, we're told we're setting up a meeting for February and it's too late in the process, so don't expect anything in the budget to change. And then we just heard, in fact, the budgets not even finished. So, we are still making major decisions. So,

it's that kind of question that we're trying to sort out and sort through and come together.

CITY MANAGER LOUIS A. DEPASQUALE: So wh--wh--

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: We, we totally understand that it's challenging, it is pushing the envelope a little bit about trying to change a culture. And I for one, look, I'm on record as saying many times, and I think the council as a whole acknowledging we have tripled the amount of affordable housing. That is definitely true and you can respond to council goals, but as was pointed out by Councillor Toner, they're not actually smart goals. They're not specific measurable, you know, so you could fill, fulfill those goals in a lot of different ways and you will try your best.

The whole point of this meeting is say, gee, if earlier on you can get a little more direction or specificity from the council, it might mean we won't have the kinds of things that Councillor McGovern expressed very clearly at Monday, which is saying, 20 years ago he put on something to try to do universal preschool and is still unclear where--that it's not a hundred percent there.

Just two years ago, there was a concern that the

council had not been direct enough and specific enough to be very crystal clear that in fact it was a high priority to fund a feasibility study for municipal broadband. That was the kind of thing that led to some discomfort. And as the Vice Mayor said, an uncomfortable conversation, but got us to a better place because, because we did have that conversation, it ended up hopefully, we will have, you know, the digital equity study.

But again, that took a little while because we hadn't had a meeting like this in November or December or January to do that. So, I, I understand and hear the frustration, but I also hope that we can all understand the motives and intentions here are a thousand percent the same thing, which is let's get to a budget that we can all understand and feel like we own and have input in.

CITY MANAGER LOUIS A. DEPASQUALE: So, I, I want to be respectful, but what I don't think the council understands and I'm being dead honest, is what it takes for a department head to put their budget together. So yeah, we've not all heard all the budgets, but the departments have been working on their budgets for six months and now they're about ready to present it to the city manager. So,

to think now just because it hasn't been presented, they can go about it and make all these changes is unfair to them and it's unfair to the city.

And the reason I say that is if we were not listening to the council, different arguments, shame on all of us, shame on them and throw these budgets in the barrel and start all over again.

CITY MANAGER LOUIS A. DEPASQUALE: But I do know it's just the opposite, that they've been working on this budget for six months in order to get it right for when it moves to the City Council. Now that doesn't mean, as I said, it's gonna be the perfect budget for every City Councillor and I can understand that. But it is a process that just because we are not to the final stages, 'cause we're not, means we can change it when departments are finally getting the budget--to the budget office and saying, "Okay, this is what we've been working on for six months."

And to say to them, now, "Oh by the way, we're gonna change all of that," it is unfair. That's nobody's fault. Uh, it's been the format forever and if we want to change that format, then the council certainly has a line of what the format is and the manager form a government. But we can

go about looking at that.

But I think to say now we have enough time to have major impact on this year's budget, it is just not fair to anybody. And I'm sorry I feel that way, but I think I want to be fair to the budget office and to the department heads who've put incredible time to get to this place. And we are listening to what's been said today.

And I think if based on what I was hearing from departments, we will have a lot of those goals in the budget. Coz you know, we've heard and listened, but you know, there's not gonna be a dollar amount, and I'll bring this up for open space.

However, the first opportunity to buy open space, and since I've been working for the city was BB&N. When I heard it, we struck and we bought it. Now because it was in a part of the city that had a lot of open space, somehow that was not the right decision, but it was open space and we purchased it.

And if we find open space in other parts of the city, even though the money's not in the budget, I am sure the new city manager will have the same priority. You use free cash and you buy it. But to find open space has been a

discussion for 30 years. And the first opportunity that I know of that the city really had to buy it was BB&N and I made it clear we were gonna buy it and we bought it.

So, again, we are trying, I agree with Councillor Carlone, we need more open space, but how do you go about finding it, it's not a financial issue because when it comes up, we will purchase it. So yeah, there won't be a number in the budget on that if that's an offsite issue. But I think, you know, how we use free cash also supplements a budget, which also sometimes doesn't reflect it in a budget.

But again, I think when things come up, we've used free cash to address concerns of the City Council and that is not a part of the budget, which makes it I think sometimes tricky. But I do think it's something that we will take a look at. But I do think we will have submitted a budget that hopefully the council feels supports their goals. I know we work incredibly close with the superintendent of schools, so I, I, I feel confident that the school budget will reflect the schools' goals and we've worked together with them.

And I think for the most part the city will do that,

and if there's areas we need to look at that we're not doing enough, then, then we're certainly willing to look at that. But I'm not gonna lie and say that we'll also always keep in mind the impact it's gonna have on property taxes.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yeah, yeah. I, I just, I will go to Councillor Zondervan and Councillor Carlone. Just one thing. I don't think, what I heard from the Vice Mayor was, let's make sure that we have an opportunity and all these department heads have a chance to hear from us to make sure what they put on the table is something that is in line with what we all hope.

So, this was not meant to be, we expect you to fund every single item. It really, it really truly is, let's make sure we have a collaborative back and forth instead of what, from our side, I believe I'm speaking, summarizing what several councillors including the Vice Mayor most recently said was, was really saying, let, let's get to the point where we can have those conversations about how you're interpreting our goals.

And shame on us if the goals aren't clear. Because as many of us know, those goals can be interpreted a lot of different ways. You know, I, so, so the point is you end up

interpreting them, but it doesn't mean that there aren't other interpretations. I think that's what we're trying to surface and get at. But um, I, you know, we, there, there's lots more we can talk about. I want to, um, respect the, those councillors who have put their hands up. Councillor Zondervan and then Councillor Carlone, um, have their hands up.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you. Um, I, I'm in the same place as, as Vice Mayor Mallon, but I, I do want to say that I, I completely understand where the manager's coming from and I feel like we're almost talking past each other because, you know, certainly I, I didn't come into this meeting expecting, you know, to hear about a perfect budget that does everything I want.

And, you know, I, I voted against the budget for, for three years in a row. So clearly the budget's not meeting my needs. And, and that's not a reflection on what, you know, the, the hard work that's being done by the departments or, or by the manager. It's just the reality of the, the challenges that we are dealing with in the city and really in this world are just not being addressed by

the budgets that, that have been prepared through this process.

And again, that's nobody's fault. You know, I'm not here to criticize the manager or, or the staff. You, you are doing what you think you're supposed to be doing and we're doing what we think we're supposed to be doing. And, and clearly, we're not there. And, and, you know, that needs to be heard not as criticism, but, but as just the reality that we're up against.

I mean, just two headlines from this morning, you know, sea, sea levels are expected to rise by one foot by 2050 and, and po, potentially even worse in the northeast, which is where we live. Second headline rents are going up across the country. So those are very real difficult challenges that we are facing and, and we're asking for more dialogue, more collaboration, more opportunities to weigh in to the budget process so that we can begin to address some of those challenges.

And, you know, maybe our former government doesn't allow for that, and then we have to think about a new form of government. But within the current system that we have, I think we're asking for how can we better address these

challenges through our budgets and how can we have a better process so that we're not faced with an up or down vote where I cannot in good conscience vote for the budget at the end of the day, despite all the hard work that's going into it, and, and not as a criticism for anybody's efforts, but just because it doesn't meet the challenges.

And, you know, I, I think the, the council has a lot of work to do here because I don't think the goals are where they need to be either. And, you know, just for example, climate justice, racial justice are not directly addressed in, in the goals. And so we can't expect that the budget, if it's being constructed according to those goals, then we almost can't expect those priorities to be in the budget if they're not reflected in the goals.

So that's, that's work that the council needs to do. And, and I hope that, that we will do that. In, in terms of, you know, open space, the, the manager brought that up and, you know, I, I don't have any criticism for, for that particular purchase. And, and in fact the council approved that appropriation, so we all agreed in the end that that was a good thing to do, right? Otherwise we wouldn't have voted for it.

But I think where some of the frustration comes in is that there isn't a process for looking for those opportunities and for expanding our open space other than, you know, the limited amounts that we're able to do through the Community Preservation Act.

So, you know, again, it's not so much about, you know, being opportunistic, which I think this manager is and has done a good job of, of taking advantage of those opportunities when they present, it's more about how do we create a process by which we are actively looking for these opportunities and actively bringing them forward to the council to vote on. You know, with, with affordable housing, I, I deeply appreciate the manager's efforts and, and you know, that was one of the first conversations I had with him and, and with Councillor Carlone about increasing funding.

And, you know, again, I, I really appreciate what was done and, and the funding levels have increased, but again, nobody's fault. It's still not meeting the need that is out there in the community, and it's our job to point that out and to, to try to get that addressed.

And, you know, with the home ownership opportunities,

that's really important way to address both the housing crisis and the racial injustice. And when we're, I'm not seeing that being prioritized in the budget. And, and if we, we don't get to have any insights into what's going to be in the budget, then we don't have any way of knowing that, that those things are being prioritized or addressed.

So, you know, again, I, I really appreciate this conversation and this opportunity to have this meeting, but I, I think it's, it's incumbent on us to figure out how do we have this conversation in a better way. Because, you know, it's not useful to anybody for, uh, the manager or the staff to feel frustrated or to walk away from this meeting feeling criticized, you know, we're not trying to do that. We're, we're trying to figure out how do we have a better process? How do we get to a better place where our budget is more effectively addressing the needs of the people as, as we understand them?

And, you know, we're, we're fortunate that we have the revenues to address a lot of things that other places cannot address in the same way. But that still doesn't mean that we're meeting the needs. And, and again, that's, that's nobody's fault. That's just the reality that, that

we're faced with.

So, again, appreciate the conversation and, and I hope that we can get to a better place where we can have more productive conversations about the budget going forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Councillor Zondervan. Uh, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Th, Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'll be brief. Um, I mentioned to the manager and Mr. Kale and Mr. Jennings that, um, yes, we've listed 12 to 15 areas. I, I don't think any of us expect all 12 to 15 to all of a sudden get a miracle funding. And I would imagine we would prioritize that and pick two or three that gets the greater points than just making sure that we're beginning to look at these areas. We can't do everything. Nobody's expecting us to do everything. Well, maybe I am. No, none of us are.

And, um, but these are issues that we'd rather say early, whether it's the summer coming up for the next year. We don't want to say this when you're presenting the budget, you're gonna look at us and be really upset. So, uh, we felt it made sense to bring it up now, and we know

you can't make miracles out of where you are. We get that. Um, so I, I just wanted to say that, that, um, the goal that Councillor Nolan and I briefly talked about is getting a priority of the issues and just letting you know that's what we feel needs particular funding.

I can imagine--after this conversation, I can imagine what those three are, but we--let's get all the elected officials in and figure that out and come up with something. At least that's something you can use one way or the other, and it might be over a four-year period. We'll, this is a plan to try to hit those, the areas.

And by the way, on the BB&N field, we had a lot of discussion about a portion of the site being affordable housing. Um, and the back portion and the front portion being open space, it makes the open space better, and we don't have that much affordable housing in that neighborhood, and neighbors have brought that up. They're hoping that we do that. So, I never considered it only open space and I realized we might have to go to the state, but, um, I just thought I'd say that. Thank you very much.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: You're on mute, councillor. Somebody--

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: I'm done. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Sorry. Thank you. Mr. Kale, would you like to--

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: Yeah, I, I, I, I would just say I think the City Councils adopted 12 broad goals and I think the manager's talked about how we tried to filter those to come up with priority areas. I, I would just say that, you know, one of the things that probably would be helpful is if the City Council, and I think Councillor Carlone alluded to is, is if there's a specific or, or real clarity in terms of the things that you want the new city manager to focus in on its private budget process that probably would help this conversation because frankly, that then frames the allocation of resources.

Um, and I think that may help this process, but I think it requires some clarity about what exactly the council wants to fund. I would also say, and I think the council knows this, but in addition to trying to fund the goals, frankly there's a running the business of this almost three quarters of a billion-dollar business that is a day-to-day operational budget, uh, implications that we have to fund in addition to trying to find initiatives to

fund the goal.

So, I, I guess clarity would be very important coz then I think it, it becomes a much easier conversation. And then frankly, and I'll say it is, you know, since, you know, and then there's a level of discipline collectively, because then it can't be, "Well, we funded your top four priorities with specifics of what you wanted to get done," but by the way, we really did want you to do that. But by the way, there's 18 things on this side of the table, that we also would like you to do."

So, I think it's, it, again, I think the manager has said this and I think the cultures and the council that this is a, is a conversation. But I think the things that would be helpful is clarity and discipline about where we spend our resources. Cause the, the, the, the stream of money is not limitless.

And I think there has to be, as you said, maybe looking at things that we can do differently. But I would also, just to be clear, the department heads are very skilled at when opportunities present themselves to reallocate resources so that if there's a vacancy that we don't have to fill, but we can use that to fund another

priority area, we do that. Um, we did that in the finance department with the general services area, for example. And maybe we don't give ourselves enough credit for that, but I think the department heads annually and especially during budget time, take advantage of opportunities to refigure maybe how they do things and use those resources to meet some of the City Council priorities.

So, I, I just want to let you know that this whole evaluation is not something that doesn't go unno--unnoticed or unthought about, it does. It's just done probably more quietly, because I'll be honest too, I've been on the school side where the superintendent proposed reductions, uh, in a variety of support areas. And frankly, there's a lot of wasted energy on trying to discuss those things when in fact they end up don't happening.

So, I think the managers over the past have found a way to be creative in a very skilled and quiet way. So, I just want to bring that out because I've seen, um, dismantling of programs that end up getting put back because frankly, um, the outcry, good or bad, becomes the louder voice. So, I'll just leave you with that. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Mr. Kale.

Uh, talk to you offline about those school programs. I know of a few that should have been ended earlier and had no outcry coz they had no effectiveness. Um, Councillor Toner.

COUNCILLOR PAUL F. TONER: I, um, not to, to belabor the point, but just, uh, based on what Mr. Kale and the, the city manager have been saying is, I, I think one thing that would be helpful, and maybe my senior colleagues already know this, but uh, is, you know, just really understanding, you know, how much of that \$750 million budget is actually, uh, available, uh, that isn't being used to run as Mr. Kale said, the nuts and bolts business of the city.

Um, and, and when I say available, where there's some flexibility because, you know, uh, the, the just the, the, the personnel costs usually are, I think the budget said 65%, 70% just for salaries and benefits and, you know, um, I, I don't think we as the council can necessarily know the intricate details of, uh, the department heads and what their needs are in those particular areas and how best to allocate, uh, their personnel.

But I think the, you know, I, I don't, I don't mean to say extra money, but the, the money that's not already tied

up in, uh, the, the personnel budget and that has some ability for us to work with the city manager and those department heads to, uh, focus those dollars on our priorities would be, uh, helpful. Uh, thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, uh, Councillor Toner. And, and yes, the idea is there may be reallocation within the city as well, not new dollars coming in. I don't see any other hands up. I'm not sure if any other of my colleagues or the city staff want to contribute.

So, I, I believe what I've heard and what, uh, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone and I have heard is, is there's certainly notes from this meeting. We will certainly, uh, circle back and, and talk to the finance staff about what, uh, next steps might be on this. I know there's, there's, um, was some, some passion and some concern, which is, as I start out the meeting, there was some trepidation and, and I know some of, uh, certainly we've heard some of the, um, emotion from a number of people both frustration and concern.

And, and yet I think channeling, as the Vice Mayor said, if there's difficult conversations th--this probably

reflects what's under the surface anyway, so let's have them out. Let's find a productive way to have these conversations instead of ignoring them or pretending that they don't exist.

'Cause there's, and, and I think there is a way forward, and it may be that, uh, one clear path I see already in improvement is that, uh, I will work with, uh, Co-Chair Councillor Carlone to start this process next fall for the next year's budget long before something happens.

And to also, um, build on our goals, we're probably overdue for goals retreat and, and also maybe have them add more specificity and be more smart goals. Um, but again, the context and, and intention here is to, is to have a listening session both back and forth, but also to ensure that the city actually did have some input.

And I think you heard some thoughtful comments from every one of my colleagues in an area of--where they hope and expect to see some things in the budget, if not this one, then a future budget.

And, and despite some of the emotions shown by, uh, many people on this, I hope that we all feel like we can move forward. I, I, I am concerned, I'm not sure we can

identify right now how this moved us forward, but I think it moved us forward at least to the point of understanding we need to have more of these conversations and we need to be clearly directed and ensuring that input happens, um, earlier on in the budget process.

Um, Councillor--Co-Chair Councillor Carlone, do you want to add anything? Or city manager if you want to--or if the Mayor is still here and wants to, um, add anything, um, happy to have that before we adjourn.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Uh, I'll just say, um, I think you summarized it very well. I think the meeting was productive. Yes, it was passionate, but that's okay. Look, we all care about the same thing. It's just coming to a point where we're not surprising each other. And, um, and I think that's good. And yes, we should have started earlier.

And actually, Taha Jennings hinted at the summer is when we should start, the sooner the better. And we can always invite Louie back. Uh, he, I'm sure he'd enjoy it. Uh, he can make recommendations for increases then as a citizen. So, thank you, Co-Chair. I thought it was a very productive meeting and, uh, I'm thrilled that you had full

attendance here.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER DAVID KALE: I, uh, I would just say, thank you for the meeting. I think we're a lot closer to being on the same page than we give ourselves credit for on both sides. And I think when this is all said and done, I think we'll find that out. But thank you.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: It won't make a joke about how until I don't see the millions, I expect to see very specific in the budget. Um, okay. I don't see any other hands up. It is 4:18, I believe we can adjourn. And just to remind people again, it may be challenging. The expectation from the public is not if they have public comment next week that they're gonna flood us all and we will change the budget dramatically.

But it really is setting up a process by which we are letting the community know we do expect to hear from them and next year it, it will be earlier on in the process. So just to set our own expectations, who knows, you know, how much, uh, input there will be then. But, but we did want to establish that we wanted to hear from people. Councillor Carlone.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Madam Chair, I just

wanted to add, I, I see the look on, uh, staff's faces. You'll be part of these discussions, we're not gonna do our own thing. The whole idea is to work together and better understand the process and your needs. Thank you. I'll stop.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yeah. Thank you. And I, uh, we will be adjourning this, but there is, uh, another meeting for the entire, uh, council of forum tonight at six o'clock. So even if we adjourn, uh, stay tuned for that. Uh, is there a motion to adjourn?

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: So moving.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: So moved. [crosstalk]

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you. Clerk Wilson, if you could take the roll.

City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Yes

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Yes

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Yes

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Yes

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui - Yes

Councillor Denise E. Simmons - Yes

Councillor Paul F. Toner - Yes

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan - Yes

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Yes

Yes-9, No=0, Absent-0. Motion Passed.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Clerk

Wilson. If who's ever responsible could change Councillor Azeem's spelling of his first name on the Zoom, that would be terrific. Thank you, all. Goodbye.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Have a good night. See you soon.

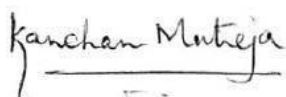
COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yes.

The Cambridge City Council Finance Committee adjourned at approximately 4:20 p.m.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, **Kanchan Mutreja**, a transcriber for Datagain, do hereby certify: That said proceedings were listened to and transcribed by me and were prepared using standard electronic transcription equipment under my direction and supervision; and I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the proceedings is a full, true, and accurate transcript to the best of my ability.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 17th day of January 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kanchan Mutreja". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature of Transcriber

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Feb 16, 2022 2:30 PM (Committee Reports)