



# HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

**The Health and Environment Committee will conduct a public hearing to receive an update on the amendments to the Floodplain regulations.**

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

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Health and Environment Committee was held on Wednesday, March 19, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Nolan. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

**At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees called the role.**

- Councillor Azeem – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote
- Councillor Wilson – Present/Remote

**Present – 5. Quorum established.**

The Chair, Councillor Nolan noted that the Call of the meeting was to receive an update on the amendments to the Floodplain regulations. Present at the meeting was Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Planning, Teal Delys, Zoning Project Manager, Jim Wilcox, Assistant Commissioner of Engineering, Kara Falise, Supervising Engineer, Jennifer Letourneau, Senior Engineer and Conservation Commission Director, Megan Bayer, City Solicitor, and Franzuskus Lepionka, Assistant City Solicitor.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks and read from the following statement (not verbatim).

We are here today to begin talking about updating the Flood Plain Overlay in order to comply with updated FEMA maps and a new Massachusetts model bylaw. This is different from our Climate Resiliency and Flood Resilience Zoning standards, which we passed in February 2023, but also deals with floodplain land use.

We need to update our Flood Plain Overlay to comply with FEMA standards and a new Massachusetts model bylaw.

Three goals of this zoning change:

1. Adopting new FEMA maps
2. Implementing the language from the Massachusetts model bylaw
3. Updating special permit process for Flood Plain Overlay to go through Conservation Commission, rather than Conservation Commission and Planning Board (who defers to Con Comm anyway)

As mentioned, this is a different zoning section than our flood and climate resiliency zoning, which is still in effect and staff are continually monitoring. This FEMA floodplain is a much smaller area and is really specific to Special Flood Hazard Areas and are important for flood insurance availability in those areas.

The goal of this meeting is to begin to familiarize ourselves and the community with the potential zoning changes so that when they come forward from CDD as a petition in the next couple of weeks, we are prepared to discuss and pass.

So now we will go to the staff presentation and following that presentation we will go to public comment, followed by Council discussion.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Teal Delys who gave a presentation titled “Flood Plain Zoning Text Amendment”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation included information on City goals, FEMA, Model Bylaw, current Cambridge flood plain regulation, Conservation Commission, anticipated zoning changes, and key takeaways.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked for clarification on when the Ordinance needs to be amended by. Teal Delys explained that the deadline is July 8, 2025, but because of the City Council summer recess, it would need to be done sooner. Jeff Roberts shared information on what the next steps will be, with a plan to communicate a Memo to the full City Council with suggested petition language and then have it be referred to the Planning Board and Ordinance Committee for review and discussion. Jeff Roberts indicated that this should all be able to get done before the summer recess. Chair Nolan asked if there was any clarity on when the zoning language would be sent to the City Council and Jeff Roberts shared that he plans to have it ready by the end of March or early April.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who asked if there is anything the Health and Environment Committee needs to do to help move this forward. Jeff Roberts responded by sharing this meeting was an opportunity to give an update on zoning and answer any questions, but the Committee does not need to do anything at this time. Councillor Wilson asked what efforts were being made to educate community members. Jim Wilcox provided information on community outreach plans through the City and through FEMA.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan asked if funding would be affected due to changes being made federally. Jim Wilcox shared that they have not heard of any changes related to FEMA.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Jen Letourneau who noted that FEMA is required to hold their own community meetings and added that dates will be shared soon on when those meetings are scheduled.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who asked what areas of Cambridge will be impacted with these changes. Jen Letourneau explained that there are six specific maps that highlight areas in Cambridge that will be affected which include Alewife Reservoir, Charles River, areas associated with any bodies of water, and isolated floodplains by elevation. Jen Letourneau added that this information is also online, and staff are available to answer any questions from residents. Councillor Wilson asked if there were any discussions with affordable housing developments and public housing. Jim Wilcox shared that any development related to affordable housing comes through DPW and during the review process, flood resilience is looked at both through FEMA and the City’s Flood Resilience Ordinance.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan asked for clarification on which maps would be adopted by the City Council and Jen Letourneau advised that it would be all six maps.

**The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the role.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

**Yes – 5. Motion passed.**

**The Health and Environment Committee adjourned at approximately 12:26p.m.**

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/984?view\\_id=1&redirect=true](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/984?view_id=1&redirect=true)

**A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a presentation titled "Flood Plain Zoning Text Amendment".**