



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

April 6, 2023

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Introduction

I submitted a 90-day report last December to share my initial observations as City Manager, review what we were able to accomplish together, and provide a sense of direction. It has now been seven months and I continue to be honored and energized to serve the City Council and our community. We are a beautiful and diverse city full of innovation, activism, and a commitment to do better on every challenge that we face. An important priority for me is to bring greater transparency to our City and help everyone better understand what we are working on together and how decisions are made. I hope to keep this practice of providing quarterly updates as a chance to reflect on what has gone well, what could be improved, and how the City can constantly improve.

Police Shooting of Arif Sayed Faisal

This has been a heavy beginning of the year. The shooting and death of Arif Sayed Faisal has weighed painfully on our community. I have worked closely with the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Councilors to respond and to chart a path forward as a City. My deep hope is that we can be in this conversation together as a community. Police Commissioner Elow and I hosted a four-hour community meeting in January where we heard grief, shock, and a desire for answers and change. The City Council held more than six hours of public meetings where we reviewed our police department's training, policies, and practices. Following these discussions, the City Council proposed a set of recommended actions. It has been and will continue to be an active and engaged conversation across all of City government.

Together, we committed to a number of concrete changes including implementing body cameras, using alternative responses to emergency calls outside of the police department, evaluating additional less lethal options, delivering on a procedural justice dashboard, and strengthening the City's mental health outreach to underserved communities. We have also hired an independent consultant to review our police department's training, policies, and practices. Further, after the District Attorney's inquest is completed, we will have the independent consultant specifically review the shooting of Faisal to assess what department changes should be made. The full inquest report and the full consultant report will be made public and we will continue to be in dialogue with the Council and the community on updates.



Police responses to people in crisis is a national challenge. Even in the last month, there have been more names to add to a too long list: Najee Seabrooks in Paterson, NJ, Irvo Otieno in Petersburg, VA, and Raul De La Cruz in New York City. We are committed to confronting this national challenge in our local community and Commissioner Elow and her leadership team have been proactive, open, and collaborative throughout these months. It's also important that we recognize that our police officers face complex, difficult, and dangerous situations where we ask them to make split second decisions weighing everyone's safety, including their own. There are not simple answers, but there are shared commitments that we can agree on – urgency, empathy, thoughtful deliberation, transparency, and accountability. We must do better and we will do this work together to build a safer and better community.

City Manager Performance Review

The City Council and I have finalized a [2023 City Manager Performance Review Plan](#), which is a Council priority and a ballot measure that the community voted for in the last city election. I'm excited to move toward greater accountability and transparency in our form of government. We have laid out a calendar, performance rating categories, and 2023 goals for my evaluation which will be conducted in a Special Meeting of the City Council by December 20. This will include a self-assessment, measurement against the goals, feedback from each City Councilor, feedback from my direct reports and leadership team, and data from both a climate survey of City staff and the annual resident survey.

I see this as an important starting point and many of this year's goals are meant to lay a foundation. For instance, I have goals focused on hiring key leadership positions, formalizing a management and organizational structure, and creating an equity and inclusion framework and targets. We have set initiative goals for universal pre-Kindergarten and police reform in recognition of their importance, but we are committed to accomplishing much more and I expect that future goals will be more expansive.

We also identified future changes we would like to make. First, is the need for more intentional and collaborative goal setting between the City and the Council. This summer, I will work with the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and City Councillors to develop a formal goal setting and strategy prioritization process that we will implement in January 2024 with the new Council term. This will help create greater focus across City government over the following two years and allow us to communicate more clearly with the community on our highest priorities.

There has also been interest from both the Council and the community for greater engagement with the budget process. However, while funding decisions are critical and reflective of our values, I believe that goal setting and strategy prioritization needs to happen first. The question is not just where we should put more resources, but what are our most important goals, what does success look like, and what do we need to do to get there? I am currently going through my first budget cycle and I'm looking forward to working with City leaders and the Council to reflect on how this went and think through how we can create greater transparency, engagement, and collaboration in the future.

Finally, the Council has frequently expressed their desire to see performance reviews implemented across the City. It's only appropriate that I should go first! I've committed to conducting performance reviews for our senior leadership team in 2023 and preparing a plan for expanding to all non-union staff in 2024. The Chief People Officer position that I have created will be a critical leader in this work, and I hope to make an announcement soon.

Organizational Chart

I have talked previously about creating a clearer management and organizational structure for the City. I'm excited to share an [updated organizational chart](#) (also see the end of this update). In many ways, this

is formalizing responsibilities that have existed in the City previously where the Deputy City Manager had responsibility for much of the day-to-day operations. I believe this will help create greater clarity internally and externally, and also support City leaders with more formal reporting relationships and accountability. I expect there may be additional updates over time and we will keep an updated version linked on the City webpage.

Financial Update

I'm also happy to [report](#) that the City continues to maintain its AAA bond rating from all three major rating agencies. I have been impressed with the strength of the Finance and overall leadership team as we seek to steward the City's budget to address critical priorities and ensure that we have long-term sustainability to tackle whatever is ahead. We continue to monitor the City's economic outlook carefully. Rising interest rates, the Silicon Valley Bank collapse, the rise of telework, and the regional growth of lab space outside of Cambridge are all trends that may affect what has been a steady history of revenue growth that has funded ambitious programs to better serve our community. We will continue to review our financial picture to ensure that we can be successful for all years to come.

We are also in the midst of developing the FY24 Budget, which we expect to submit to the City Council on May 1. It has been an exciting learning opportunity for me to dig into the complexity of our finances and the breadth and depth of the programs that we run across our City departments. We have tried to establish greater transparency in this process, and we worked closely with Finance Committee Co-Chairs Nolan and Carlone to set up more hearings prior to formal budget submission. This included a December 15 Finance Committee meeting on City Council budget priorities, a February 2 Finance Committee meeting to review Capital budgeting, and a March 23 Finance Committee meeting to review the draft police budget. I'm looking forward to discussions with the Council and community this year, and also to how we can improve this process going forward.

Updates on Council Priorities

It has been a busy quarter in tackling many Council priorities!

We provided an update on [plans to implement Universal Pre-Kindergarten](#) (UPK) in Cambridge by Fall 2024. This has been a major City Council priority over the years and research has shown that children who benefit from UPK are more prepared in early math, reading, and social-emotional development. These programs especially benefit lower income families and have a long-term impact on the achievement gap. Our program would guarantee placement for all four year olds and prioritized three year olds in a high quality pre-school program across Cambridge Public Schools, Department of Human Services Program (DHSP) preschools, Head Start, and community programs. This has been a major effort across the City and Cambridge Public Schools, and will include creating a universal application system, building a strong workforce pipeline, and developing systems and support for program quality across all our classrooms. This will also be one of our largest financial investments with City support of about \$20 million per year starting in FY25. We will begin to see that investment in this year's FY24 budget as we hire additional team members to roll out the program and begin setting aside stabilization funds to reduce the one-year impact in the next fiscal year.

The City Council has also been focused over many years on exploring the feasibility of municipal broadband. We held a Roundtable in March to discuss the [final report](#), which proposes options for building out a City-owned fiber optic network that would deliver significantly faster internet with protections for data privacy and net neutrality – all of which we struggle to achieve because of a Comcast internet monopoly in the City. The most promising scenario would be a partnership model that would attract private investment, capacity, and expertise with the City providing roughly \$150M of upfront

capital subsidy to build out the necessary infrastructure. While we are still digesting this report with the Council, the proposed next step would be to conduct market sounding and begin a partner procurement process, with an 18-24 month roadmap to a final go/no-go decision on moving forward.

There are many other areas of work that were also completed this quarter. The City stepped in with funding to ensure that the Salvation Army can continue to operate its 35 bed shelter after state funding ceased at the end of March. The Human Services team has done a fantastic job coordinating across our many providers and will continue to collaborate to serve our unhoused community and secure sustainable funding sources going forward. Our Community Development Department (CDD), working with the City Council, finalized Climate Resiliency Zoning which sets a stronger standard for new developments that will ensure green and resilient buildings across the City. This was a multi-year effort and puts us at the forefront of preparing for the challenges of more extreme weather from climate change. Finally, CDD and Traffic have made adjustments to simplify our block party permitting process, in response to Council and community feedback. This was an incredibly exciting initiative last fall, and we have improved it with clearer application information, waiver fees, and lowering the signature requirement. As we enter spring and summer, we are looking forward to more block parties and hope that this year will be simpler for residents to organize!

I am often amazed at how much is happening across the City and it's sometimes difficult to capture the full dynamic of community and Council communication to City leaders, back and forth conversations on complex issues, and the final development and implementation of changes. As we go into this next quarter, the agenda is also very full. Major items will be the FY24 budget and an important conversation on the next phase of our Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO) as we seek to confront the global climate crisis in our local community.

Final Reflections

I have been humbled by the dedication, efforts, and expertise across City leadership and staff and feel such privilege to be working for the City. There are two dynamics that stand out to me as we seek to improve our City and work better for our community. First is the challenge of finding the right answer to the complex problems that we face. Rising housing costs, homelessness, climate change, urban transit, and police reform are just some of the major issues that cities are facing, not to mention all the minor (but important) other issues on our agenda. We need to be sophisticated, empathetic, and collaborative to find the right answers. The second is the challenge of making decisions across the beautiful diversity of perspectives and life experiences in our community. We aren't always going to agree and it is often impossible for everyone to get what they want. But what we strive for in our democracy is finding a way for all voices to be heard, to distribute power across our community, and to find a path forward together.

Thank you to the City Council for this privilege, and to our community for their trust.

Very truly yours,



Yi-An Huang
City Manager

City of Cambridge Organizational Chart – April 2023

