



FINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, March 27, 2025

1:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Finance Committee will hold a public meeting to receive a status update on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in Cambridge, as well as to review and discuss the Police Department budget for FY26 before it is submitted to the City Manager, as required under Cambridge Municipal Code Chapter 2.74.040, and to further discuss Free Cash Appropriation Requests, CMA 2025 #40 and CMA 2025 #41, referred to the Finance Committee on March 17, 2025.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Catherine Zusy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1:10 PM

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 27, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 1:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Nolan. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Toner – Present/Remote

Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Mayor Simmons – Absent*

Present – 7, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

*Mayor Simmons was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 1:10p.m.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting is to receive a status update on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in Cambridge, as well as to review and discuss the Police Department budget for FY26 before it is submitted to the City Manager, as required under Cambridge Municipal Code Chapter 2.74.040, and to further discuss the Free Cash Appropriation Requests, CMA 2025 #40 and CMA 2025 #41, referred to the Finance Committee on March 17, 2025. Present at the meeting was City Manager, Yi-An Huang, Assistant City Manager for Finance, Claire Spinner, Budget Director, Taha Jennings, Director of Administration and Operations, Matt Nelson, City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, Police Commissioner, Christine Elow, Superintendent, Fredrick Cabral, Superintendent, Pauline Wells, Director of Professional

Standards, James Mulcahy, and Director of Clinical Support, Dr. James Barrett. Present on Zoom for the Police Department were Deputy Superintendent, John Boyle, Deputy Superintendent, Steven Magalhaes, Deputy Superintendent, Peter Vellucci, Deputy Superintendent, Buckowe Yam, Deputy Superintendent, Michael Medeiros, and Director of Planning, Budget, and Personnel, Manisha Tibrewal.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan opened Public Comment.

Siobhan McDonough, Walden Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition towards funding for new firearms for Cambridge Police.

Tony Clark, 301 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on how the Police budget can help support and empower communities.

John Hawkinson shared concerns about the City's Free Cash budget and the approval of appropriations by Councillors.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized City Manager Huang who offered opening remarks and thanked the Committee for allowing the City to provide an update on ARPA funds. The City Manager thanked all the City staff who were involved with the extensive work that went into ARPA funding.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Matt Nelson who gave a presentation titled "American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Update". The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who asked for clarification on how much longer the Transitional Wellness Center will receive ARPA funding. City Manager Huang explained that the Wellness Center received an additional \$3 million dollars than its original allocation, which will help the Wellness Center stay open until this June, but there will not be enough funding for it to remain open until the end of the year. The Vice Mayor pointed out how the Wellness Center is an important need for adults in the community, and there will be further discussion on the Wellness Center at an upcoming Human Services and Veterans Committee meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who asked for additional information on where the City is investing funds, managing bus transportation funds, and the difference between housing stabilization and housing navigation. City Manager Huang shared that funding is reflective of the goals of the City Council to continue to ensure that certain programs, such as expanding afterschool programs, are supported to help residents maintain some of the resources that have been offered through the help of ARPA funding. City Manager Huang noted that Agenda Packet page 12 refers to potential programs that can be incorporated in the operating budget. Matt Nelson and Claire Spinner provided a brief overview of the public school bus program in Cambridge, noting that bus passes have been supported through the general budget, and ARPA allowed the opportunity to provide passes to Cambridge students who attend Cambridge Public Charter Schools in Cambridge. City Manager Huang noted that housing stabilization relates to rental assistance and housing navigation relates to providing resources to help people through the process of finding housing or not being evicted.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to close public comment. Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Mayor Simons – Yes

Yes – 8, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan thanked the City Manager and his team for the ARPA update.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Commissioner Elow and members of the Cambridge Police Department to discuss the Cambridge Police FY26 budget. Commissioner Elow introduced members of her team and offered opening remarks. Manisha Tibrewal gave a presentation titled “Cambridge Police FY26 Budget”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. In addition to the presentation, the Police Department provided information on the FY26 budget by division.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan asked Commissioner Elow if there were any responses to the questions that were submitted to the Police Department from City Councillors in advance of the meeting. Some of the questions from Councillors were included in the Agenda Packet. Commissioner Elow explained that her team is working to create a detailed response to all the questions and will provide a summary of answers at a later date.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan asked for more information on the RFI for body worn cameras. Manisha Tibrewal provided an overview of the process the Police Department went through to make the decision on which vendor would be the best fit for the Department. Councillor Nolan shared that it would be important to have the information on the RFI and RFP procedures documented to be transparent about how the specific camera model was chosen. Councillor Nolan asked why the Police Department was requesting four additional employees to assist with the camera program, noting that PERF report advised one employee. Commissioner Elow and Superintendent Cabral explained the process on how they determined the number of additional employees that would be needed, noting that there was extensive research that was conducted and they anticipate many public records requests, adding that staffing will be evaluated as the programs continue to move forward.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who asked how much funding the Department is receiving from the State Law Enforcement Body Worn Camera Program and if the City has considered putting the request for four additional employees in a different Department, such as the Police Review and Advisory Board. Superintendent Cabral shared that the Department received a grant in the amount of \$245,000. Jim Mulcahy pointed out that there are strict rules on what information can go outside the Police Department, as well as laws and regulations that would go with maintaining the footage.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zusy who asked if fleet maintenance and firearms are part of the overall budget. Commissioner Elow explained that a one-time purchase of firearms goes through the Capital Budget or Free Cash process. Manisha Tibrewal provided information on the fleet and the Fleet Maintenance Unit and how it relates to the budget and provided additional information on appropriations for new firearms. Councillor Zusy asked for more information on the amount of sworn officers that CPD employees and if the number of Officers is more than what the City needs. Councillor Nolan provided information on an analysis that was conducted previously, noting that a reason why more Officers are needed reflects the number of people that come to the City every day. Commissioner Elow also shared information on how CPD is incorporating more civilians into the Department.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who asked if the reason for requesting new firearms is related to active lawsuits and discontinuation of the P320. City Solicitor Bayer shared that the reason for the request for new firearms are for all the reasons that were presented at the March 17, 2025 City Council meeting and provided a general overview of the current litigation, noting that it cannot be discussed in detail. Councillor Wilson asked why the new firearm was selected to be purchased and used by Officers. Commissioner Elow explained why the Department felt it was a good time to purchase new firearms because of the new body worn cameras and that Officers will need new holsters that work with the cameras in addition to the Department’s supply of the current firearm running low. Councillor Wilson asked how the Department will ensure that Officers are turning on their cameras even if they are not drawing their weapon. Commissioner Elow provided an overview of how the cameras get activated when an Officer draws their weapon and added that there will be twelve audits per quarter to make sure Officers are complying with the Policy of turning on the camera’s, with a three-to-six-month grace period as Officers are getting used to using and activating the camera’s. Councillor Wilson asked if there is any room in the CPD budget that would be able to offset the costs of the new firearms.

Commissioner Elow and Manisha Tibrewal indicated that there was no room in their current budget to help with costs and provided examples as to why.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who shared that he had similar questions to Councillor Wilson's. Vice Mayor McGovern shared support for the body worn cameras, highlighting that they need to be used efficiently and properly. The Vice Mayor noted the importance of looking at the Police budget and understanding how the budget is being broken down and used in necessary ways.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who had a clarifying question on Agenda Packet page 25 and asked how the Public Safety Cameras are being funded. Commissioner Elow shared that the Department received the UASI Grant for six overt cameras in Central Square and noted that the License Plate Recognition technology will also be funded through a grant. Manisha Tibrewal added that the technology will be funded through grants, but the Département was also able to provide funding as well through the Operating Budget. Councillor Siddiqui asked Commissioner Elow if it would be possible to receive answers to the written questions that were submitted by Councillors in advance of this meeting for the March 24, 2025 City Council meeting. Councillor Siddiqui explained that it would be helpful to have a response to the questions for decision making purposes.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Toner who asked if the City Council were to vote against the new firearms, would it be likely that the cost of firearms would increase if they were purchased in the future. Commissioner Elow shared she was more concerned about the Departments currently low supply of firearms and the need to purchase new ones. Councillor Toner shared support for the purchase of new firearms and how they partner with the new holsters to make it an even better safety feature. Councillor Toner asked Councillor Siddiqui if the only questions that need to be answered by the Council meeting were related to new vehicles and the purchase of new firearms. Councillor Siddiqui confirmed those were the questions she was looking forward to having answered.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who shared that at a previous meeting he had asked if it is required for all Police Officers to carry firearms, which the Commissioner indicated that it was. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler explained that he had reached out to the City Solicitors Office for more information and read language from MGL Chapter 41 Section 8, which was the opposite information provided at the previous meeting. Commissioner Elow clarified that the City does have authority and discretion over if Officers carry firearms and provided examples as to why it is important for all Officers to carry one. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler provided suggestions of Officers who may not need to carry a firearm, such as School Resource Officers. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler added that it may be good to have future conversations on the topic of School Resource Officers and if they are needed in the school system.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who shared her appreciation for the information that was provided by the Police Department and provided examples of why she supports the purchase of new firearms. Mayor Simmons noted that it would be important to include the School Committee in conversations about School Resource Officers.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan asked if PERF has changed their recommendations related to body worn cameras being activated when a firearm is pulled out of the holster and shared the reasoning behind PERF's recommendation. Councillor Nolan shared she would like more information related to this at the Council meeting. Mayor Simmons offered the suggestion for Councillors to prioritize which questions they would like to be answered at the Council meeting. Councillor Nolan pointed out that the questions were submitted to CPD in advance of this meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zusy who shared concerns about the Police budget being so high, noting that it is higher than Somerville and Boston. Councillor Nolan explained that there have been previous conversations and data collection that reflect why the budget is the way it is.

Th Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who noted that other Departments in Cambridge have higher budgets than surrounding communities, not just the Police Department. Councillor Wilson shared that as a former School Committee member, there have been extensive conversations on the topic of School

Resource Officers. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that School Resource Officers have been in the school system for over thirty years, with only one incident involving a firearm.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui, who shared her frustrations about the questions that were submitted in advance not being answered at the meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Mayor Simons – Absent

Yes – 7, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

The Finance Committee adjourned at approximately 3:03p.m.

Clerks 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/989?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Matt Nelson, Director of Administration and Operations, transmitting a presentation related to an ARPA update.

A communication was received from Matt Nelson, Director of Administration and Operations, transmitting information on ARPA funded projects.

A communication was received from Manisha Tibrewal, Director of Planning, Budget, and Personnel, transmitting a presentation regarding the Cambridge Police FY26 Budget.

A communication was received from Manisha Tibrewal, Director of Planning, Budget, and Personnel, transmitting Cambridge Police Department proposed FY26 budget by division.

A communication was received from Chair Nolan, transmitting question to CPD related to the procurement process for body worn cameras, firearm appropriation, and the FY26 Budget.

A communication was received from Councillor Siddiqui, transmitting questions to CPD related to replacement firearms.

A communication was received from Councillor Zusy, transmitting questions to CPD related to new firearms and transport vehicle.

Transmitting Communication from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of \$570,000 from Free Cash to the Public Investment Fund Police Extraordinary Expenditures account for the procurement of replacement firearms for the Police Department. These funds would support the purchase of replacement firearms for the Department. Police Department firearms are typically replaced on approximately a ten-year cycle. The manufacturer has ceased production of the model currently used and replacements are almost impossible to source. It is important that department personnel are all trained on the same firearm to ensure safety and interoperability. TABLED IN COUNCIL MARCH 17, 2025

Transmitting Communication from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of \$160,000 from Free Cash to the Public Investment Fund Police Extraordinary Expenditures account for the procurement of a new fully electric accessible transport wagon. This funding will allow the purchase of a fully electric, American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant transport wagon to replace one of the aging F350s. The new vehicle will ensure the safe and comfortable transport of community members to court, shelters, and other service providers.