

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
HUMAN SERVICES AND VETERANS COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 11, 2026**

HUMAN SERVICES AND VETERANS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor Al-Zubi, Co-Chair
Councillor McGovern, Co-Chair
Councillor Flaherty
Councillor Simmons
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Human Services and Veterans Committee was held on Wednesday, March 11, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:00 a.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor McGovern. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Co-Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Al-Zubi – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Flaherty – Absent
Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Simmons – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

Co-Chair McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss support services and planning considerations for disabled residents in Cambridge. Present at the meeting was Rachel Tanenhaus, Coordinator-ADA, Executive Director, Kate Thurmna, Assistant ADA Coordinator, Deputy Director, Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Specialist, Stephanie Groll, Assistant Commissioner for Transportation Planning, Deidre Brown, Chief of Equity and Inclusion, Chris Cotter, Housing Director, Adam Corbeil, Cambridge Recreation Division Head, Joseph Corazzini, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, Brooke McKenna Commissioner of Department of Transportation, John Nardone, Public Works Commissioner, Jennifer Caira, Deputy Chief of Planning, Cortney Kirk, Landscape Architect, Alexis Buckley, Senior Inclusionary Rental Housing Manager, Kara Falise, Supervising Engineer, Andrew Reker, Transit Program Manager, and Kathy Watkins, Deputy City Manager. Also present were Councillor Zusy and Mayor Siddiqui.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Deputy City Manager Watkins for opening remarks.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Rachel Tanenhaus who gave a presentation titled “Access and Inclusion: The Fabric of Cambridge”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Deputy City Manager Watkins who recognized City Staff to provide brief examples and overviews of how their departments support accessibility and residents and community members with disabilities.

Adam Corbeil and Joseph Corazzini highlighted the inclusive recreation programs and support for youth and individuals with disabilities, while also sharing the importance of ongoing and collaborative efforts to support accessibility across all programs within the City.

Cortney Kirk provided information related to inclusive playgrounds and designs to support children of all abilities. Chistina DiLisio provided an overview of accessibility grant programs for small businesses while also highlighting the importance of education and compliance.

Chris Cotter and Alexis Buckley shared information related to housing support for residents with disabilities, such as home improvement programs, and how the City supports inclusive housing and ensures accessibility is addressed within housing programs.

John Nardone provided an overview of the efforts made towards sidewalk accessibility, snow removal, and their ongoing collaboration with the Disabilities Commission. Kara Falise provided additional information related to sidewalk assessment and DPW's approach to the Complete Streets Plan and how accessibility plays a role in decision making.

Stephanie Groll shared information related to bike programs and inclusive planning processes while Andrew Reiker provided an overview of the City's coordination with the MBTA and addressing ongoing transit issues. Brooke McKenna shared information related to transportation planning and accessibility, highlighting the efforts towards safer streets and more inclusive designs.

Co-Chair McGovern opened Public Comment.

John Summers, Fairmont Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about the ongoing accessibility challenges and urged the City to have stronger support for residents with disabilities.

Nieta Greene, 223 Concord Turnpike, Cambridge, MA, shared personal experiences with accessibility barriers and stressed the need for more inclusive city services.

May Lu, Cambridge, MA, urged the City to improve accessibility in public spaces and focus on more inclusive design for all residents.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Co-Chair Al-Zubi who asked for more information related to the sidewalk shaving program and pointed out that there are many uneven sidewalks, especially in Harvard and Central Square. Co-Chair Al-Zubi raised broader concerns about accessibility barriers in everyday life for residents and for those who are unhoused. Co-Chair Al-Zubi noted the importance of addressing neurodiversity, infrastructure planning, and improving access to employment and services. John Nardone provided an overview of the sidewalk shaving program, adding that it has been beneficial to improving sidewalk accessibility and safety. John Nardone

shared that the program is city-wide and staff are out assessing the best way to repair it. Chris Cotter shared that he would need to consult with staff to provide information on how shelter systems support unhoused individuals with accessibility needs. Rachel Tannenhaus shared information on the diversity of disabilities, including neurodevelopmental and non-visible disabilities, and how accessibility needs to be flexible and inclusive. Rachel Tannenhaus also provided information on the challenges individuals face when they are transitioning out of the school system.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who shared her personal experience with a family member with disabilities and questioned how the City can provide better support for individuals looking to find employment or maintaining their independence, especially for those who do not have a strong family support system.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Mayor Siddiqui who acknowledged all of the information that was shared and the efforts that are being made by staff. Mayor Siddiqui asked for more information regarding the current shortage of ASL interpreters and what plans are being made by the City to improve accessibility in City buildings, adding that it is important to share the progress that is being made. Kathy Watkins provided an overview of the accessibility improvements that are being made in City buildings and shared she could create a list of improvements to provide in the future. Kate Thurman provided an update regarding ASL interpreter availability and shared the challenges of finding in person interpreters. Kate Thurman added that the City is currently exploring different vendors and contract options and is still using virtual interpretation services when necessary.

Co-Chair McGovern who shared concerns and suggestions, such as improving accessibility at City meetings by providing better accommodation and communication tools. Co-Chair McGovern added that the City could also work towards making the City website easier to navigate for people with disabilities. Co-Chair McGovern offered comments related to the need for increasing outreach and education about what programs are available. Co-Chair McGovern raised concerns related to access to parking for caregivers and accessibility at City events, adding how important it is to have consistent and inclusive standards across the city. Co-Chair McGovern shared additional concerns related to infrastructure, such as sidewalks, sidewalk lighting, and snow removal. Co-Chair McGovern emphasized the need to review data on residents with disabilities, improve hiring practices, and to continue to recognize the progress that is being made while also addressing improvements.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Co-Chair Al-Zubi who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Councillor Flaherty – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Absent

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Yes – 3, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

The Human Services and Veterans Committee adjourned at approximately 1:04p.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:
[Mar 11, 2026 Human Services and Veterans Committee - Cambridge, MA](#)