



# FINANCE COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

9:00 AM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Finance Committee will conduct a public hearing on the city and school budgets covering the fiscal period July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10:24 AM
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11:11 AM
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Joan Pickett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<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"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Finance Committee was held on Tuesday, May 7, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 9:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Nolan. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

**At the request of the Co-Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Absent\*

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Pickett – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Toner – Present/Remote

Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Mayor Simmons – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

**Present – 7, Absent – 2. Quorum established.**

**\*Councillor Azeem was marked present and remote at 10:24a.m.**

**\*Vice Mayor McGovern was marked present and in the Sullivan Chamber at 11:11a.m.**

Co-Chair, Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks and noted that the call of the meeting was to discuss the City budget covering the fiscal period July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. Present at the meeting was City Manager Yi-An Huang, Deputy City Manager, Owen O’Riordan, Assistant City Manager for Finance, Claire Spinner, Assistance Finance Director, Michele Kincaid,

Budget Director, Taha Jennings, Deputy Budget Director, Angela Pierre, Principal Budget Analysis, Daniel Liss, and Jackson Price, Director of Community Engagement.

Co-Chair Nolan recognized City Manager Huang who offered opening remarks and thanked the Finance and Budget team for all their hard work preparing the FY25 budget and shared he looks forward to the conversations regarding the goals and priorities of the City Council and the City as they are reflected through the budget.

**Co-Chair Nolan opened Public Comment.**

Young Kim, 17 Norris Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments relative to the FY25 budget.

Co-Chair Nolan reviewed the list of Departments that have been pulled by Councillors for questions regarding the budget. The Departments that were pulled were, Housing Liaison, Finance Administration, Assessing, Information Technology, Human Resources, Law, Mayor's Office, Public Celebrations, Community Safety, Fire, Inspectional Services, Police, Peace Commission and Traffic, Parking, and Transportation. Co-Chair Nolan noted that if the Committee is unable to get to all these Departments today, they will be pulled for discussion at the next Finance Budget Hearing on May 14, 2024.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the City Clerk, City Council, Election Commission, Employee Benefits, Equity and Inclusion, Diversity, DGVPI, Auditing, Assessing General Services, Purchasing, Treasury/Revenue, Reserve, Animal Commission, Emergency Communications, License Commission, and PRAB FY25 proposed budgets to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation. Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 6, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.**

**EXECUTIVE – LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Co-Chair Nolan, Councillor Siddiqui, Co-Chair Pickett, Councillor Wilson brought forward comments and questions. The City Manager and his team were recognized to respond and offered comments regarding the Executive Office's goals and vision, and how the increase in budget has helped his Department move forward with achieving those goals. In addition, the City Manager and his team highlighted the importance of having consistent communication across all Departments and how to coordinate best practices when it comes to community outreach.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the Executive-Leadership-Communications proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 7, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.****HOUSING LIAISON**

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison, who offered comments regarding the increase in budget and new initiatives that will be taking place within the Housing Liaison Office. City Manager Huang thanked Maura and her team for all their hard work with the overflow shelter in Cambridge and being a point of contact for resources and assistance. Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, Mayor Simmons, Councillor Wilson, Councillor Siddiqui, and the Chair were recognized for comments. Maura Pensak elaborated on the growth changes in the Department and shared it has been a goal to do more review of various policies with City staff. Mayor Simmons noted the importance of this Department having the right amount of funding to be proactive in the high volume of work that is being done.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the Housing Liaison proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

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

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Robyn Culberston, Executive Director for the Cambridge Office of Tourism, who offered an overview of the Tourism Department and responded to comments and questions brought forward by Councillors. Robyn Culberston provided information on the relationship between Cambridge and Boston tourism as well as the relationship between the Tourism Department and Business Associations. It was also noted by Taha Jenning and Robyn Culberston that the Tourism Department is only partially funded by the City of Cambridge and that there are other sources and partnerships that help.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to forward the Tourism proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

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

## **FINANCE ADMINISTRATION**

Co-Chair Nolan shared her questions relative to the reserved funds and investment policy. Taha Jennings noted that that information would be found under the summary portion of the Finance Administration section of the budget book.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Co-Chair Pickett who made a motion to forward the Finance Administration proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 9. Motion passed.**

## **ASSESSING**

Co-Chair Nolan introduced Gayle Willett, Director of Assessment, who passed out an Executive Summary (Attachment A) to Committee members sharing information relative the Assessing Department. Gayle Willett was available to respond to questions and comments from Councillors regarding assessed values, the tax rate period, residential tax percentage, interest rates, and timeline for assessments. She noted the certification of assessed values occurs in the fall.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Co-Chair Pickett who made a motion to forward the Assessing proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes  
Councillor Pickett – Yes  
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes  
Councillor Toner – Yes  
Councillor Wilson – Yes  
Mayor Simmons – Absent

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

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Co-Chair Nolan introduced Patrick McCormick, Chief Information Officer, who was joined via Zoom, and his team, Deputy Directors Mike Dugas and Eric Belford. Co-Chair Nolan asked for more information on the request for two new positions within the Department. Claire Spinner offered an overview of the two new positions and explained their role and how they will support the City. Co-Chair Nolan asked for a status update on municipal broadband and digital equity. Patrick McCormick shared a recent update with the Transportation and Public Utilities Committee on April 24, 2024 and provided additional information on how IT is working towards these goals. Deputy City Manager O’Riordan shared that there needs to be more internal discussion on how to move forward with these goals. Co-Chair Nolan highlighted the importance and urgency of digital equity. The team from IT responded to additional questions from Co-Chair Pickett, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, and Co-Chair Nolan relative to software upgrades and training.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to forward the Information Technology proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes  
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes  
Councillor Nolan – Yes  
Councillor Pickett – Yes  
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes  
Councillor Toner – Yes  
Councillor Wilson – Yes  
Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 9. Motion passed.**

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Raecia Catchings, Chief People Officer, who gave an overview of the proposed FY25 budget for Human Resources. Co-Chair Nolan, Councillor Wilson, Councillor Siddiqui, and Co-Chair Pickett offered comments and questions. Raecia Catching provided a breakdown of the review process for staff with leadership roles in the City will be participating in that and how their participation will help support the City’s goals and initiatives. Additionally, Raecia Catchings shared how the performance review process will continue to move forward with support staff. Raecia Catching also provided a brief overview of how Human Resources and IT are working together to explore new in-house technologies that could be more

user friendly for employees, and reviewed long term goals that Human Resources is working towards.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Wilosn who made a motion to forward the Human Resources proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 9. Motion passed.**

**The Finance Committee went into recess at 12:20p.m.**

**Co-Chair Councillor Nolan made a motion to reconvene the meeting.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Pickett – 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

Mayor Simmons – Absent\*

**Present – 8, Absent – 1. Quorum established.**

**\*Mayor Simmons was present and in the Sullivan Chamber at 1:09p.m.**

## **LAW**

Co-Chair Pickett recognized Acting City Solicitor Megan Bayer who provided an overview of the responsibilities of the Law Department. Megan Bayer responded to questions and comments from Councillors and shared how the Law Department requires additional help from outside counsel in some circumstances especially when specialized legal expertise is required and how funding assists with that.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the Law Department proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes  
Councillor Pickett – Yes  
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes  
Councillor Toner – Yes  
Councillor Wilson – Yes  
Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 9. Motion passed.**

**Co-Chair Nolan made a motion to discuss the Mayor’s Office Budget at the May 14, 2024 meeting.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes  
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes  
Councillor Nolan – Yes  
Councillor Pickett – Yes  
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes  
Councillor Toner – Yes  
Councillor Wilson – Yes  
Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 9. Motion passed.**

## **PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS**

Co-Chair Nolan introduced Jason Weeks, Executive Director of Cambridge Arts, and shared how the Arts Council operates and how funding provides the Art Council to be able to provide resources and events to Cambridge. Jason Weeks responded to comments and questions from Mayor Simmons, Vice Mayor McGovern, Co-Chair Nolan, and Councillor Wilson who all shared their appreciation and support for the work that is done through the Arts Council. Jason Weeks shared some of the struggles that have been faced since the pandemic and how arts and culture has been affected but noted that there have been productive conversations with the City Manager and his team on how to move forward to bring support to local artists and organizations. City Manager Huang provided additional comments to support Jason Weeks and the intentional work that is done through the Arts Council.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the Public Celebrations proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes  
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes  
Councillor Nolan – Yes  
Councillor Pickett – Yes  
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes  
Councillor Toner – Yes  
Councillor Wilson – Yes  
Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 9. Motion passed.**

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Liz Speakman, Director of Community Safety, who provided a brief overview of the Community Safety Department as a new Department in the City. Liz Speakman shared many challenges the new Department has faced while trying to roll out. Liz Speakman responded to questions and comments from Councillors, and shared her excitement about responders taking on more responsibilities as the Department continues to train and grow with additional staffing. In addition, Liz Speakman shared the role of her staff and the type of support they have been able to provide in recent weeks, and all of the intentional and good work they have planned moving forward.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the Community Safety proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Mayor Simmons – Yes

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

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Fire Chief Thomas Cahill who offered a brief overview of the staff structure of the Fire Department and how the budget plays a role in being able to operate efficiently and quickly to calls of service. Chief Cahill responded to questions that were brought forward by Councillors and offered a review of how recent and ongoing renovations in different Fire Houses throughout the City have been able to provide a more comfortable and safe living space for Cambridge Firefighters.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Co-Chair Pickett who made a motion to forward the Fire Department proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes



Mayor Simmons – Absent

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

## **INSPECTIONAL SERVICES**

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Peter McLaughlin, Commissioner, who was joined by Jacob Lazzara, Assistant Commissioner, Anthony Tuccinardi, Operations Manager, and David Powers, Environmental/Rodent Officer. Peter McLaughlin offered opening remarks and shared the important roll that Inspectional Service Department (ISD) plays within the City. Co-Chair Nolan recognized Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, and Councillor Toner for comments. Peter McLaughlin and his team responded to all the questions that were brought forward and highlighted the work that is being done with rodent control. When asked what the most common complaint ISD receives, Peter McLaughlin noted that it was early morning noise complaints on construction sites and provided a review of how he and his team respond to those complaints. Councillor Toner shared concerns brought forward from contractors who have pointed out the many different applications that need to be filled out within the City, and asked if everyone was located in one area would it make it for easier for everyone involved. Peter McLaughlin agreed it would probably be easier, but logistically because there are so many different departments involved, it would be a challenge for everyone to be in one area at this time. Deputy City O’Riordan pointed out that the ViewPoint software that is available online is a great tool for contractors to use for communication between City departments when applying for certain things.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who made a motion to forward the Inspectional Services proposed FY25 Budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Absent

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

## **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Co-Chair Nolan noted that the Police Department recently met with the Finance Committee on March 26, 2024 to review their proposed budget and recognized Commissioner Elow who offered opening remarks. Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Azeem, Mayor Simmons, Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Wilson, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, and Co-Chair Pickett for comments and questions. Commissioner Elow and her team, Manisha Tibrewal, Director of Planning, Budget, and Personnel, Superintendent Pauline Wells, Superintendent Frederick Cabral, and Dr. James Barrett who was joined via Zoom, were all available to respond. City Manager Huang was also available to respond to questions and comments. Commissioner Elow and her team provided an update and timeline on initiating body cameras and calls for service using ShotSpotter, in addition to providing remarks on how the budget plays a roll with helping

to increase transparency and revise policies while also recognizing the City's goals and priorities relative to the Cambridge Police Department.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the Police Department proposed FY25 budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 7, No – 0, Present – 1, Absent – 1. Motion passed.**

## **PEACE COMMISSION**

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Brian Corr, Executive Director of the Peace Commission, who offered a review of the duties and responsibilities of the Peace Commission. Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson and Mayor Simmons for comments and questions. Mayor Simmons noted the important role Brian Corr plays in the City and urged the Council and City to consider offering him more support. The suggestion was made that further discussion relative to the Peace Commission and its budget happen in the Civic Unity Committee.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Mayor Simmons who made a motion to forward the Peace Commission proposed FY25 budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Present

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Present

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 6, No – 0, Present – 2, Absent – 1. Motion passed.**

## **TRAFFIC, PARKING, AND TRANSPORTATION**

Co-Chair Nolan recognized Commissioner Brooke McKenna, who was joined by her team Jeff Parenti, Assistant Commissioner for Street Management, Stephanie McAuliffe, Assistant Commissioner for Parking Management, and Eberto Pallares, Finance Manager. Brooke McKenna gave a brief overview of the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation (TPT) Department. Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, Co-Chair Pickett, Councillor Azeem,

Councillor Wilson, Co-Chair Nolan offered comments relative to parking apps, ticket disputes, automated parking monitors, the installation of bike lanes and all the costs associated with them, salaries and wages, the use of technology to help with street activity and traffic signals, street/sidewalk maintenance and street reconstruction, permit fees, ridership goals and increasing public transportation, and roadway safety program. Commissioner McKenna and her team, as well as Deputy City Manager O’Riordan were available to respond and provide detailed information to the questions and comments that were brought forward.

**Co-Chair Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho – Wheeler who made a motion to forward the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation proposed FY25 budget to the Full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Mayor Simmons – Absent

**Yes – 5, No – 0, Absent – 4. Motion passed.**

**The Finance Committee adjourned at approximately 5:30p.m.**

Attachment A – Executive Summary from Assessors Department

Attachment B – Communications received.

**Clerk’s Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/743?view\\_id=1&redirect=true](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/743?view_id=1&redirect=true)

**A communication was received from Taha Jennings, Budget Director, transmitting the FY25 Budget Hearing schedule.**

**A communication was received from Taha Jennings, Budget Director, transmitting a list of department pulls for the May 7, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting.**

# Executive Summary Fiscal Year 2024



This Executive Summary, in response to City Council requests, summarizes information contained in the City Manager’s recommendations for the required votes by the City Council to establish the FY24 residential and commercial tax rates by the Board of Assessors and the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Responsible and responsive fiscal policies and practices are key to addressing the challenge of balancing expansion and investment in new programs and initiatives, while also minimizing the impact of increases on taxpayers.

## Property Tax Rates

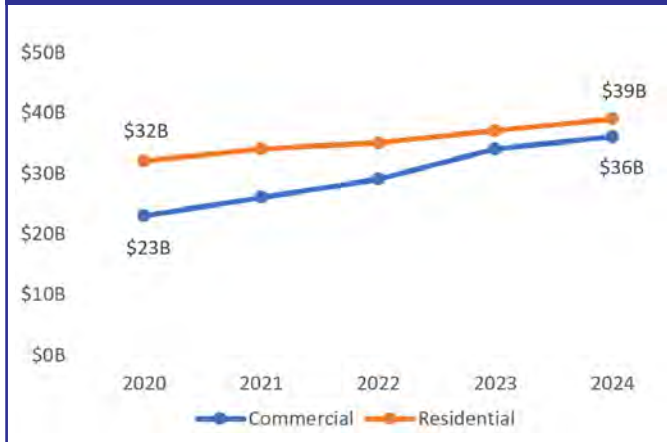


## Assessed Values by Class

Property Type	FY24	Percentage
Residential Property	39,460,679,997	52%
Commercial Property	16,032,578,283	21%
Industrial Property	17,951,401,249	24%
Personal Property	2,438,935,270	3%
<b>Total Assessed Value</b>	<b>75,883,594,799</b>	<b>100%</b>

For FY24, the total assessed value of taxable property is \$75.9 billion, a \$4.7 billion increase over FY23. This is a 6.7% increase over FY23 values, showing the continued strength of the Cambridge real estate market.

## Property Value



For FY24, the residential share of the levy decreased to 33.8% from 34.2% while the residential class makes up 52% of the assessed value. The commercial share of the levy has increased to 66.2% from 65.8% last year and makes up 48% of the assessed value.

This year both the residential and commercial property tax rates will increase. The continued growth in the industrial class is a benefit to residential taxpayers by allowing the City to lower the minimum residential factor calculated by the Department of Revenue.

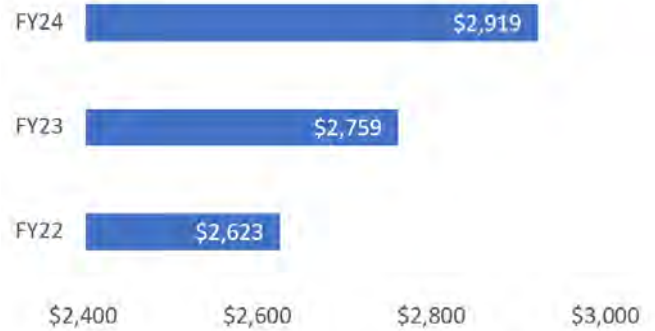
## Change in the Median Value and Tax Bill by property class

	FY23 Value	FY23 Tax Bill	FY24 Value	FY24 Tax Bill	Dollar Change
<b>Single Family</b>	\$1,618,400	\$ 6,725	\$1,754,550	\$7,468	\$743
<b>Condominium</b>	\$732,600	\$1,534	\$750,900	\$1,527	(\$7)
<b>Two Family</b>	\$1,501,700	\$6,041	\$1,596,900	\$6,535	\$494
<b>Three Family</b>	\$1,737,900	\$7,425	\$1,848,300	\$8,023	\$598

## FY24 New Growth by class Tax Levy



## Residential Exemptions Tax Savings



The residential exemption reduces the property tax bill by excluding a portion of the residential property value from taxation for qualified homeowners.

### FY24-Change to Lowest Historical Residential Percentage

The continued large new growth of the industrial class has benefited residential taxpayers. The city has again almost \$1 billion dollars in new growth value from the Industrial class. The industrial class is primarily lab properties in Cambridge. This translates into more than \$10 million dollars in tax levy growth for the industrial class. This has a direct positive impact on the residential taxpayers by lowering the residential tax rate this year. Additionally, this allows Cambridge to go below the lowest historical residential percentage for all future years. Lowering the historical percentage is advantageous to Cambridge homeowners by lowering their taxes when many residential values are increasing in a high inflation environment.

FY23 Lowest historical residential percentage based on 150% shift to CIP: 34.2329%

FY24 New lowest historical residential percentage based on 150% shift to CIP: 33.8010%

## Comparison of Residential Percent of Tax Levy Paid

Municipality	Residential Percentage of Property Tax	Comrc/Ind/PP Percentage of Property Taxes	Res Tax Rate	Commercial Rate
Boston	41.7	58.3	10.74	24.68
Brookline	83.5	16.5	9.97	16.70
Cambridge	33.8	66.2	5.92	10.46
Newton	84.2	15.8	10.18	19.0
Somerville	70.8	29.2	10.34	17.35
Watertown	60.9	39.1	13.58	19.73

Cambridge is FY24, all others using FY23.

**From:** Vickey Bestor <vickeybestor@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 5:25 PM  
**To:** City Clerk; Patricia Nolan; Pickett, Joan; City Council  
**Cc:** City Manager; O'Riordan, Owen  
**Subject:** For Tuesday, May 7, 2024 and going forward: Finance Committee Budget Review -- Please fully review expenses of the CSO

Dear Patty, Joan and Members of the Finance Committee

I know you are under deadline to review the proposed budget and in doing so much review ongoing projects. This morning I wrote you all regarding the need for better transit within Cambridge following the article in the Boston Globe about the difficulties you face in considering fare-free transit. Building off the points I made in that letter, which I copy below to ensure you have it all in one place, I ask you to take a detailed look at all the expenses to-date, and those projected, for the Cycling Safety Ordinance.

Census records indicate that the percentage of people who cycle to work or school may only be in the single digits, and even under the best of circumstances no more than 1/4 of our citizens could possibly be expected to bike as a principal form of transportation, however 100% of our citizens would benefit from free transit. An often stated objective of the CSO is to get more cars off Cambridge streets. So far that does not appear to be happening. Additionally, polluting congestion is increasing throughout North Cambridge and in and around Garden Street due to the increase in clogged and overflow traffic caused by delays from the CSO.

People still need to commute, and unless and until there is a viable means of transit that all people can use, the traffic and pollution of motor vehicles will not decline.

Please require the departments that collaborate in producing the CSO to provide a comprehensive accounting of expenses to date and those projected through the completion of the currently mandated CSO. Bicycle travel is an important part of the mix but can never be the only or even the primary mode for most residents. Please take another look at my memo regarding the benefits of thinking more broadly about fare-free transit. And please report fully on the expenses of the CSO.

Thank you again, Vickey Bestor

Copy of my letter regarding fare-free buses:

**From:** Vickey Bestor <vickeybestor@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Fare-Free Buses  
**Date:** May 6, 2024 at 9:32:25 AM EDT  
**To:** Sumbul Siddiqui <ssiddiqui@cambridgema.gov>  
**Cc:** City Clerk <cityclerk@cambridgema.gov>, City Council <citycouncil@cambridgema.gov>, City Manager <citymanager@cambridgema.gov>, Owen <ooriordan@cambridgema.gov>

Dear Sumbul+ City Council, Clerk, CM and Owen:

I saw the article about fare-free buses in Cambridge in this morning's Boston Globe (5/6/24) in which you were quoted Sumbul. Thank you.

I want to voice my very strong support for a truly comprehensive system of fare-free buses in Cambridge. Yes the #1 is the obvious choice to start with and we can and should go much farther. If we can spend millions of dollars each year building separated bike lanes that benefit fewer than 1/4 of Cambridge residents (in the most optimistic estimates), why can't we make all buses fare-free, and expand collaborations with Harvard, MIT and the other private bus running groups in our city to benefit close to 100% of our citizens. With all the great minds in this city, it should not take much to plan a comprehensive network that uses the MBTA routes and those of private operators, with a plan to eventually expand it citywide. This is a potentially easy problem.

The environmental upside to a comprehensive bus system in the city is best way to cut down the use of individual cars in the city:

- Open to all users
- Accessible to all ages and disabilities
- Full electrification of fleet easily possible and within sight
- Has potential to help get individual cars off the road better than any other mode of transportation
- No expensive equipment investment for individual (bike, car, e-bike)
- User does not foot cost of upkeep, insurance, vandalism, theft
- Potential for inclusion in scheme for payments in lieu of taxes for Harvard, MIT and other institutions
- Once established annual upkeep/shared-costs are highly predictable
- Huge potential for expansion using cellphone apps (schedules, maps, ride hailing)
- Could become a great tourism promo
- Could get impaired drivers off the road

And I could go on.

Beginning this process is a modest investment that should be a top priority. There is no deep pocketed lobby pushing it like the bike lanes, but everyone should easily be able to agree on its usefulness.

Thank you all,

Vickey Bestor  
149 Upland Road