



ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Ordinance Committee will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 from 3:00p.m.- 5:00p.m. to discuss Citizen’s Zoning Petition from Khalida Griffin-Sheperd, et al. to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Section 11.206.1 and Subsections 11.206.1 and 11.206.2. APP 2024 #10.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3:08 PM
Joan Pickett	<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 type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Ordinance Committee was held on Tuesday, May 21, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00 p.m. by the Co- Chair, Councillor McGovern. 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 Co-Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Nolan – Absent*
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Toner – Present/Remote
- Councillor Wilson – Present/Remote
- Mayor Simmons – Absent
- Councillor Pickett - Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 7, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

*Councillor Nolan was marked present and remote at 3:08p.m.

Co-Chair McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss Citizen’s Zoning Petition by Khalida Griffin-Sheperd, et al. to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Section 11.206.1 and Subsections 11.206.1 and 11.206.2, Application 2024

#10. Present at the meeting was Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD), Chris Cotter, Housing Director, Cassie Arnault, Housing Planner and Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor. Co-Chair McGovern shared that the Petitioners were present at the meeting as well and included Lee Farris, Kavish Gandhi, and Dan Totten.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized the Petitioners who gave a presentation titled “Affordable Housing Trust Zoning Petition”, which was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview of the petition, funding vouchers, expanding membership, member stipends, quarterly reports, and a response to feedback. After the presentation, the Petitioners were available to respond to comments and questions from Councillors.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Chris Cotter who gave a presentation titled “Griffin-Sheperd, et al. Petition”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. Chris Cotter reviewed in the presentation Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) composition, reporting and stipends, and expanded uses of AHT funds. Chris Cotter noted that also included in the Agenda Packet was a letter from the Law Department to the Planning Board and AHT as well as the Planning Board’s recommendation regarding the petition. Co-Chair McGovern reviewed the memo from the Planning Board and made note that the Planning Board makes no recommendation and has deferred the petition to the City Council, AHT Board, and the legislative process.

Co-Chair McGovern opened Public Comment.

Elaine DeRosa, 4 Pleasant Place, Cambridge, MA, offered comments and suggestions related to voucher programs and the AHT.

Carolyn Magid, 71 Reed Street, Cambridge, MA, urged the Committee to support the petition.

Teresa Cardosi, 7 Woodrow Wilson Court, Cambridge, MA, offered comments that were in favor of housing vouchers, but not funded by the AHT.

James Williamson, Churchill Avenue, Cambridge, MA, offered comments and suggestions regarding the presentation.

Catherine Hoffman, 67 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments that were in favor of affordable housing and vouchers.

Suzanne Blier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the petition.

Florie Darwin, 7 Follen Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on affordable housing and housing vouchers.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments regarding the City’s goals towards affordable housing.

Richard Kushnic, 20 Oak Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the petition.

Glenna Wyman, 25 8th Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in strong support of the petition.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who had clarifying questions on stipends and quarterly reporting. Iram Farooq and Chris Cotter responded and provided a review of the type of reporting that is conducted. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked for clarification around the AHT and state legislation. Kavish Gandhi shared three possible options and Megan Bayer provided additional information.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who shared that she appreciated the conversation and the valuable tools and resources that the petitioners are bringing forward. Councillor Wilson asked how ARPA funding could be used to help support and invest in a program like this if funding was available. Iram Farooq responded by sharing she would have to discuss with the Finance team on what the capacity of ARPA funds could be available, and provided suggestions on how funding could be created if ARPA was not available as well as concerns of using ARPA dollars due to that funding through them may not always be available. Councillor Wilson had additional questions for the petitioners who were available to respond.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who had clarifying questions regarding funding towards shelter services and vouchers. Megan Bayer responded to assist in clarifying the legislation and special act. Chris Cotter offered additional comments to help support comments made by the Acting City Solicitor, and shared that the City will work towards reaching the ideas and goals that are being brought forward in the discussion.

Co-Chair McGovern made a motion to extend the meeting to 5:20a.m.

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.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Azeem who shared he was generally supportive of a many different pieces that are being presented at the meeting. Councillor Azeem agreed that it is a good idea to look more into the legislation to see if there is a possibility for the City to have more options.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Pickett thanked the Petitioners for their presentations and the examples of different models that were provided and shared that she is interested in learning more about what they are proposing. Councillor Pickett also shared concerns about

funding resources. Chris Cotter was available to respond and provide more information around the funding process.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Siddiqui who shared it would be beneficial to focus on some of the options that have been discussed and noted that using vouchers may be a quicker and easier process than going through the legislature. Councillor Siddiqui shared that she appreciated the comments that were made by Megan Bayer on options on how to continue to move forward.

Co-Chair McGovern who shared he appreciated the conversation and pointed out the importance of having a voucher-based program in Cambridge and listening to the voices of those from the AHT. Co-Chair McGovern offered suggestions on ways the City can move forward to reach specific goals with inclusionary units and voucher programs. Kavish Gandhi responded to comments from Co-Chair McGovern regarding how to offer as many vouchers as possible through vouchers and inclusionary units, noting that Cambridge Housing Authority has a similar system in place currently. Chris Cotter agreed that it is worth looking into similar programs, but noted some challenges that may arise. Lee Farris offered additional comments and suggestions regarding a voucher-based program. Megan Bayer pointed out that a project-based voucher program is still something the City is exploring and shared preliminary thoughts of how they could be used in Cambridge. Co-Chair McGovern highlighted the importance of funding and looking at this as an additional expenditure. Co-Chair McGovern shared he would like to see a voucher-based program in place sooner rather than later. Co-Chair McGovern shared that he does not believe this petition is ready to move forward today and needs additional conversations and should remain in the Ordinance Committee. Dan Totten agreed that they and the petitioners support anything that moves in a similar direction towards a voucher-based housing program.

Co-Chair McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who made a motion to adjourn the 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 – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Mayor Simmons – Absent

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:18p.m.

Attachment A – The City Clerk’s Office received eleven communications.

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/751?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Kavish Gandhi, transmitting a presentation regarding Citizen's Zoning Petition by Khalida Griffin-Shepaerd, et al. relative to the Affordable Housing Trust.

A communication was received from Chris Cotter, Housing Director, transmitting a presentation regarding the Griffin-Shepherd, et al. Citizen's Zoning Petition.

A communication was received from Chris Cotter, Housing Director, transmitting a letter from the Law Department to the Planning Board and Affordable Housing Trust.

A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a memo with the Planning Boards recommendation.

A Zoning Petition Has been received from Khalida Griffin-Sheperd et al. regarding Affordable Housing Trust Zoning.

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment A

From: Leigh <leigh.j.manley@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 4:58 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Griffin Petition

Hello

I am a Cambridge resident writing in support of the Griffin petition. I think that this petition's aims of creating a funding pathway for a local voucher program and permanent supportive housing for unhoused residents is a much needed improvement to our city.

Best

Leigh Manley

Erwin, Nicole

From: Kathleen Moore <kathleensmoore@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 2:21 PM
To: City Council; Planning Board Comment; cddzoning; City Clerk
Subject: In support of the Housing Committee's proposal

I urge you to support the ongoing Housing Committee process to end exclusionary zoning, to legalize two-family, triple-decker, and apartment buildings up to six stories in Cambridge citywide.

Please table the Ronayne petition while the Housing Committee and stakeholders undertake further discussion on the most effective way to encourage building more multifamily housing. This citizen petition insufficiently changes zoning to encourage building new, environmentally friendly multi-family homes rather than larger—and more expensive—single-family homes and duplexes. The petition does not allow any additional height and leaves large setbacks unchanged. Height and setback limits are two central reasons why, even where apartment buildings are technically legal in Cambridge, they do not get built.

Allow Cambridge to address the housing crisis meaningfully, and not performatively by merely changing zoning on paper.

Kathleen Moore, 9 Doane Street

Erwin, Nicole

From: Thomas <tkresina@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 2:21 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Please support multifamily zoning citywide

Hi,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposal to implement multifamily zoning citywide in Cambridge. The shortage of units has created an untenable market for all but the wealthy, and this will only serve to harm the city—both in the short and long-term.

I work in the city but lives in Boston. I'd love to live in Cambridge but cannot due to the unavailability of units and high cost of housing. I'm strongly considering leaving the Boston area due to the high costs of rent across the entire metro region.

Please do your part in revitalizing the city and giving young people like myself the opportunity to live in the city I love—and not be priced out by a critical lack of supply.

Best,

Tomás Kresina

Erwin, Nicole

From: Fiona Qu <fionaqu.3@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 2:16 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Note in support of multifamily housing proposal

Dear Cambridge City Council,

My name is Fiona Qu and I live at 375 Broadway, Unit 1R in Cambridge. I am unable to make it to the hearing this afternoon, I'd like to express my support for the multifamily housing proposal being considered.

I am a PhD student and currently live in a condo in a three-story, 21 unit building. Prior to living in my current unit, I have only ever rented in triple deckers in Cambridge and Somerville. If only one or two family homes were available, I would not have been able to afford to stay. In the past five years, it has been difficult to see the friends I've made in Cambridge (many of whom are early career students, scientists, writers, and creatives) decide to move to other cities to put down roots, citing the high cost of housing as the primary reason for leaving.

I love living in Cambridge because of its vibrancy, and am grateful for the opportunities it has given me. I urge you to allow multifamily housing citywide - it will directly help alleviate the housing crisis and prevent people from being priced out of the city and communities they love. Please vote in support of this proposal!

Thank you for reading and for your consideration!

Best,
Fiona Qu

Erwin, Nicole

From: Kathy Watkins <kathywatkins@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 1:27 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Amend zoning establishing Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Dear Mayor Simmons and Cambridge City Councilors,

I am writing to support the petition from the Cambridge Housing Justice Coalition which is before the Ordinance Committee today.

It is very important that the Trust guarantees substantial representation on its board for members of the community who live in affordable housing and have been impacted by the housing crisis. There should also be a stipend for Trust members. Currently the Trust operates in an almost secretive way. They make no quarterly reports and accept no public comments at their meetings. They meet on weekday afternoons which makes it impossible for many to attend. I believe that adding more representation to the Trust would make it more accessible to the community in general as well as adding expertise from the people who understand non-market housing in ways finance/non-profit administrators do not. The Trust needs more than one or two low-income members in order to keep them from being marginalized and sidelined as happens now.

The Trust should explicitly be allowed to directly fund a city subsidy program which would provide municipal vouchers for Cambridge residents. It makes the most sense for the Trust to be the source of this funding since it is the largest recipient of money related to affordable housing. There is a precedent for the Trust funding municipal vouchers as Somerville uses its Trust for this purpose.

Finally, the Trust should be explicitly allowed to fund housing for the unhoused. I would like to add that they should also add supportive housing for Cambridge Housing Authority tenants and others who need an increased level of care. If you speak with any resident of CHA senior/disabled housing, you know that there is huge problem of mentally disabled residents who endanger the lives and wellbeing of their fellow tenants. Currently the CHA has nowhere to house these residents and they are allowed to remain in dangerous situations. No one wants to evict residents with severe psychiatric issues.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Kathy Watkins
90 Fawcett St Apt 511
Cambridge

Erwin, Nicole

From: Danielle M <danielle.mulligan12@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 1:11 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: In Support of the Griffin Petition

Dear Cambridge City Council,

I am writing in support of the Griffin Petition and ask for your support. Among other benefits, it is critically important that we create a funding pathway for a local voucher program and permanent supportive housing for unhoused residents. As research has consistently shown, the [root cause of homelessness is a lack of appropriate housing](#) and a [housing-first model in permanently supportive housing](#) is well-documented as an effective solution to end homelessness. If we want to build an equitable city, we need to start with meeting the needs of our residents most marginalized historically and presently. The Griffin Petition will make explicit that the Affordable Housing Trust can target some of these specific and evidence-driven solutions.

Additionally, it will enable spending local money on emergency housing vouchers -- a critical complement to the important work that the trust is already doing by filling gaps in the system that are leaving our most vulnerable residents behind (immigrants without permanent status who are not eligible for Section 8). Somerville just established a local voucher program using money from their affordable housing trust that will serve 30 undocumented families with kids in their public schools. Service providers such as Greater Boston Legal Services have called on Cambridge to do something similar. This petition opens the door to getting it done.

Lastly, in order to promote equity in the implementation of the AHT the Griffin Petition gives a (compensated) seat at the table to those most impacted, and asks for quarterly updates to the council.

Thank you,

Danielle

Erwin, Nicole

From: Shelley Rieman <shelleyrieman@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 10:49 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk; Lee Farris; Kavish Gandhi
Subject: Cambridge Housing Justice Coalition at the Ordinance Committee

Dear City Councilors,

I am writing to strongly urge you to adopt the efforts of the Cambridge Housing Justice Coalition to add crucial amendments to the Affordable Housing Trust. Please support the zoning petition to allow the Affordable Housing Trust to directly fund a city subsidy program-- municipal vouchers, and to expand housing options for the unhoused.

As we all know, Cambridge is experiencing a crisis in affordable housing for MANY residents. Recently, a woman approached me in Central Square. She looked desperate. I reached in my purse to give her a couple of dollars. She said, "No, but thank you. What I need is a place to live. Can you help me?" I cannot, but you can.

Thank you in advance for supporting the CHJC and the people of Cambridge.

Sincerely,
Shelley Rieman
201 Franklin St.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Carolyn Magid <cmagid@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 10:16 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Affordable Housing Trust Zoning Petition at Ordinance Committee today

Dear Mayor Simmons, Vice Mayor McGovern, and Councillors:

I am writing in strong support of the Khalida Griffin-Sheperd Affordable Housing Trust Zoning Petition.

The petition calls attention to the desperate need for municipal vouchers and provides a funding pathway to deliver them through the AHT, which currently receives a substantial amount of city funds devoted to affordable housing. In addition to the 6000 people who live and work in Cambridge who are on voucher waiting lists, there are other mixed-status families, families who are below the minimum income for inclusionary zoning, and unhoused individuals and families who fall through the cracks in existing programs. Vouchers can make an immediate impact, unlike affordable housing construction projects (which I also support) that take years to accomplish.

The petition makes explicit the use of the AHT to expand options for the unhoused. While the City and Trust have made some initial efforts towards this, much more needs to be done.

The petition adds people to the AHT Board who are or have been impacted by the housing crisis. There are different kinds of expertise: the lived experience of community members who have struggled with housing is critical expertise that the AHT Board has mostly been lacking. Adding these community members in numbers at which they could be effective will change how the Board functions. This will be a change for the better not only because more expertise will be represented, but because doing so should make the workings of the Board more accessible to the community, as is appropriate for a public board serving the public good.

I know that there is a legal memo arguing that some aspects of the petition would require a home rule petition or other enabling steps. Since Somerville is already using its AHT to fund vouchers, there is obviously some way to do this.

We should do more to meet unmet housing needs. We should add impacted community members to the AHT Board. **I urge the Ordinance Committee to support this zoning petition.**

Best regards,
Carolyn Magid
71 Reed Street

Erwin, Nicole

From: Stephen C <sjcellucci@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 10:13 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Griffin Petition

Dear Councilors,

I was not one of the petitioners, and I will not be able to attend today's public hearing at 3pm, but I would like to voice my support for the Griffin Petition to amend the Affordable Housing Trust section of the Zoning Ordinance. As you know, many of our most vulnerable residents are currently falling through the cracks of our existing support systems and are at risk of displacement as a result; this, of course, includes unhoused people. We need to do more, and the Griffin Petition lays out a path to do so.

As a property owner who considers myself incredibly lucky to have secure housing for myself and my family, I want my tax dollars to go toward emergency housing vouchers and solutions such as permanent supportive housing for unhoused people. Amending the zoning code to make these things explicitly possible is a reasonable first step.

I am aware that the Planning Board has reported that amending the Zoning Ordinance is *not* the appropriate first step, partly due to advice from the Acting City Solicitor. Indeed, as citizens, the petitioners had limited ways to move the ball forward, and they chose the best means available to them. My understanding is there are still multiple ways you could appropriate the funds. You could change the structure of the Trust through a home rule petition, just like Somerville did, or much simpler, you could fund the programs through the regular budget, pressuring the city manager to execute the spending.

Housing is an emergency for many people in Cambridge, and they need our help now. You are empowered to find a way to appropriate funds for these programs. It doesn't matter to me how you do it. Just get it done!

Thank you,

Stephen Cellucci
32 Vineyard St

Erwin, Nicole

From: Ellen Mei <ellenwmei@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 9:14 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Vote YES on Griffin Petition

Dear councillors,

I am asking you to please vote YES in support of the Griffin petition to create a funding pathway for a local voucher program and permanent supportive housing for unhoused residents, among other things. Over the past month, I have seen a, seemingly recently, unhoused elder woman struggling to make her way around the city streets. She has gone from 5 suitcases worth of belongings to 3 suitcases. That is adding insult to the injury of losing her home in her years when she should be enjoying time with friends, family, and grandchildren. As Cambridge becomes more expensive and more people face the possibility of becoming unhoused, it is important to allow the Affordable Housing Trust to spend money getting people off the streets and into homes.

Thank you,
Ellen Mei
169 Monsignor O'Brien Highway

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Ellen Mei, RD (*she/her/hers*)
phone: +1 469 879-0946
email: ellenwmei@gmail.com

Erwin, Nicole

From: Nella LaRosa-Waters <nella75@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 9:14 PM
To: City Council; Nella LaRosa-Waters; City Clerk
Subject: Griffin petition

I am writing in support of the Griffin petition.
Nella LaRosa-Waters
54 Crescent St. 02138