



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2026-199
IN CITY COUNCIL
June 22, 2026

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Over the past several years, the City has undertaken significant work to strengthen the recruitment and appointment processes of its boards and commissions (Multi-Member Bodies). Last fall, the City launched an internal improvement project to strengthen the processes and systems used to support more than 50 Multi-Member Bodies. As part of these ongoing efforts to ensure these bodies remain effective, representative, and aligned with the City's goals and Charter, I am proposing a phased review of the ordinances governing our appointed Multi-Member Bodies.

The City's Multi-Member Bodies were established at different times through City ordinances, policy orders, or state law. As a result, there is significant variation in how their purposes, responsibilities, membership requirements, appointment processes, staffing structures, and reporting expectations are defined. While these differences are sometimes intentional and appropriate, there are opportunities to modernize ordinance language, improve consistency, clarify responsibilities, and better align governance structures with current practices and community needs.

The collaborative and flexible review process is designed to promote consistency where appropriate while recognizing that Multi-Member Bodies serve different purposes and may require unique governance structures. The goal is not to make every board identical, but rather to establish a clearer and more consistent governance framework while preserving the unique mission and legal requirements of individual bodies.

Any recommended ordinance changes resulting from this review will be brought forward through the City Council ordinance amendment process for consideration and approval.

To begin this work, the City plans to review Multi-Member Bodies established solely through the Municipal Code and that are supported by Executive Directors, along with several inactive bodies listed in the Municipal Code. (see Appendix A). With the exception of the Family Policy Council, all active Bodies included in this initial phase are housed within the Department of Equity and Inclusion.



Reviewing this cohort first will allow the City to pilot and refine the review process before expanding the effort to additional Multi-Member Bodies.

Each Body will, at a minimum, examine its:

- Purpose & Mission
- Authority & Responsibilities
- Membership Structure
- Appointments & Terms
- Operations & Governance
- Staffing & Support
- Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility
- Accountability & Reporting

Reviews will include a staff assessment, input from current members, opportunities for public engagement, review by the Law Department, and the development of ordinance recommendations for City Council consideration through the Ordinance Committee process (see Appendix B). A proposed timeline for each phase is also found in Appendix B.

Following completion of this first phase, staff will return to the City Council with recommendations for future phases of the project. Subsequent reviews will likely prioritize older ordinances and opportunities to evaluate similar Multi-Member Bodies in logical cohorts.

I look forward to continuing to work with the City Council, Multi-Member Body members, residents, and City staff on this important initiative.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yi-An Huang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Yi-An Huang
City Manager

APPENDIX A

Multi-Member Bodies with An Executive Director (established by City Ordinance only):

- American Freedmen Commission
- Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities
- Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship
- Commission on the Status of Women
- Family Policy Council
- Human Rights Commission
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus Commission
- Peace Commission
- Police Review and Advisory Board

Inactive Multi-Member Bodies (not currently meeting or appointed):

- Advisory Committee of the Veterans Service Department
- Cambridge Animal Commission
- Cambridge Consumer Advisory Commission
- Emergency Management Advisory Council
- Neighborhood Councils

APPENDIX B

Boards & Commissions Ordinance Review and Modernization Initiative

Project Objective

Modernize and standardize the City's boards and commissions (Multi-Member Bodies) ordinances to ensure governance structures remain effective, equitable, transparent, and aligned with current community needs while preserving the unique purpose of each multi-member body.

Summary of the Review Focus Areas

Area of Review	Key Questions
Purpose & Mission	Is the mission still relevant and clearly defined?
Authority & Responsibilities	Do responsibilities reflect current practice?
Membership Structure	Are membership requirements appropriate and representative?
Appointments & Terms	Are term lengths, limits, and vacancy provisions clear and effective?
Operations & Governance	Are meeting, quorum, and officer (chair, secretary, etc.) requirements appropriate?
Staffing & Support	Does the current staffing model remain effective?
Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility	Are there barriers to participation or representation?
Accountability & Reporting	Are reporting requirements and measures of success clear?

Review Process

Task	Lead	Key Activities
Staff Assessment	Executive Director (ED)/Staff	Ordinance review, membership analysis, operational assessment
Board Self-Assessment	Board & ED/Staff	Mission, governance, challenges, opportunities
Public Engagement	Board & ED/Staff	Public meeting and community feedback
Legal Review	Law	Legal analysis and ordinance drafting
Draft Recommendations	Law and ED/Staff	Proposed amendments and rationale provided for City Manager consideration
Ordinance Process	City Council	Review and adoption of amendments

