



HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

5:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Human Services and Veterans Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss the final report from the Ad Hoc Working Group on Homelessness released on January 31, 2022.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

The Human Services and Veterans Committee held a public hearing on March 23, 2022 to discuss the final report from the Ad Hoc Working Group on Homelessness released on January 31, 2022.

Councillor McGovern read the Governor's Executive Order regarding remote participation and requested that the Deputy City Clerk call the roll to indicate a quorum for the hearing.

The roll was called and resulted as followed:

PRESENT

COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN, COUNCILLOR ZONDERVAN, VICE MAYOR MALLON - 3

ABSENT

COUNCILLOR AZEEM, COUNCILLOR TONER

- 2

A QUORUM IS PRESENT WITH THREE MEMBERS.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you. Madam Clerk, I see Jeff in the attendees section if you can please promote him to panelist. We're also joined today by Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Mayor Mallon. Thank you for being here Councillor Carlone. Thank you. All right, well, why don't we get started. Before we begin, I just sort of introduce what we're here to talk about. In May of 2021, Mayor Siddiqui appointed me to Chair the Ad Hoc Working Group on homelessness with the facilitation of J.O. Consulting led by Cambridge resident Jeff Olivet and Donald Whitehead. This group made up of City staff, providers of Homeless Services and members of the enhanced community met from June through September 2021 and heard from local, state, and national experts on how to address the needs of our unhoused community. I want to thank the Mayor for granting me the honor of chairing this committee. I'd also like to thank Jeff, Donald, and their team for facilitating these conversations. Mostly I wish to thank all the members of the committee including those from the unhoused community, not just for volunteering their time to serve but for what they do every day in their work. Like every city across the country, Cambridge is not immune to the struggles facing the unhoused community, on any given night over 500 people in Cambridge are in

shelters are on our streets. Without a home people are at risk of greater health issues, mental health issues, substance use disorder, unemployment, and even death. There was an article in the Cambridge chronicle just today about a young man who was unhoused in Harvard Square who passed away. This is unacceptable, and inhumane in a city, state, and country of our wealth. Although Cambridge does a great deal to try and support our unhoused community. We know it's not enough, and we know that we can't do it alone. My hope is that this report will offer short, medium and long term initiatives that we can pursue to not only get more people housed, but to meet their immediate needs. The agenda for this meeting is as follows, we will first hear from the Mayor who would like to say a few words, we will then go to Jeff Olivet, who will lead us through a presentation on the work of the committee and our recommendations. We'll also make some comments regarding his new role as executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and what support will be forthcoming for cities from the federal level. Jeff will need to leave a bit early. After his presentation will go directly to questions from the committee for him, regarding the taskforce will then hear from DHSP, regarding work that they're doing, and will be doing to support our unhoused community, we will then have public comment, and then further discussion by the committee. Again, I wish to thank everyone for being here this evening. I you know as we move forward in this discussion, the thing that I try to hold when I when I think about these issues is, let's remember that every unhoused person we see on the street was once a 10 year old kid who never wanted this for them when they grew up. When you ask a child what they want to be when they're an adult, not one of them says homeless. Let's remember that these are folks that are someone's father, mother, brother, sister, aunt, uncle. They have never envisioned this for themselves. They deserve better. Let's hold that compassion in our thoughts as we discuss these issues as we move forward and prioritizing this work. With that, I would like to turn it over to Mayor Siddiqui to make some brief comments, because she also has another meeting to head to tonight. Before we do that Madam Mayor, I do want to say just bookkeeping, we did receive one communication from Teresa Cardosi that needs to be entered into the record, Madam Clerk. With that, Madam Mayor, please take the floor.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Well, thank you so much Councillor McGovern. Thank you for allowing me to speak. I want to just to mention that you mentioned that May date about the appointment, the progress that how we got here, what started much longer than that you and I had been talking about this towards the end of 2020. I was really happy to appoint you as Chair and appoint this working group. I'm really glad to see everything that's come as a result. I want to also acknowledge my team, my Chief of Staff Michael Scarlet, and my Constituent Support Manager Adrian Klein, who have participated in the majority of the meetings. Michael is actually here today, as needed. So unfortunately, as you mentioned, I'm heading to a meeting with Winco management and residents in Walden square. Cannot stay for this. But as you've mentioned, Councillor McGovern, I think they're really some strong recommendations that the Ad Hoc Group came up with. I really, I think the framing about the short term, medium term and long term is really critical. Thank you to all the working group members, Jeff. Of course, Ellen, and the entire team who have been working really hard on these issues or for so long. I look forward to seeing all these recommendations, these priorities in the ARPA funds and in next year's budget, and I know a lot of the work has already started. Thanks for having me and take care.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you, Madam Mayor. We're now going to go to Jeff Olivet, Madam Clerk if you can make sure that Jeff can share his screen. I think, Jeff, you have some slides to share.

JEFF OLIVET: Yes. I want to share the report and just talk through it a little bit now.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: I introduced Jeff in my opening comments. I did have the pleasure last week, I think it was just last week, we were in Washington DC at the National League of Cities. It all kind of blurs together. Jeff was on a panel at NLC talking about the unhoused community and what's sort of happening at the federal level. What are some things coming down the coming down the

pike for financial as well as strategic support to help guide cities. I will say and we're going to hear from DHSP later and I do want to thank them also for their work, there's obviously a lot more that we need to do. We see that every day on our streets, but we are also doing a tremendous amount. It's when you listen to what's going on in other communities, I'm really impressed with the collaboration and the work that we're doing here, because that's just not happening in a lot of other places. There's a long way to go, but we are, we are further ahead than a lot of other municipalities. Also, I just want to point out, we're joined by Councillor Toner, thank you for being here. Jeff, I will turn it over to you. I don't know what you want to do first, if you want to talk about your new role and what that piece of information or the presentation, I'll leave that up to you.

JEFF OLIVET: Great, thank you, Councillor McGovern. Thank you all for being here tonight. Those of you who've been part of the Ad Hoc working group, thank you all for the just incredible work you've put in over the last several months on this. As Councillor McGovern said, I'm in sort of dual role tonight when I was working with you all over the last several months I was a free range consultant doing work with communities all over the country on homelessness and racial equity and kind of helping systems do their work better. About two weeks after I submitted this final report on behalf of our team to Councillor McGovern and Mayor Siddiqui. My formal appointment by the Biden Harris Administration went through and I'm now the executive director of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, which is the only federal agency charged with really coordinating federal homelessness response, working with HUD and Health and Human Services and VA, and 17 other federal agencies to try to align the administration efforts. I'm still in Cambridge a bit, I'm have a footprint there. I'm spending a lot more time in Washington DC, and in communities around the country these days.

I think Councillor McGovern, to your point, maybe I'll just start with the big picture, which is sort of the federal landscape and what's happening and then situate the recommendations we have for you all in that in that larger context. I may blur the lines a little bit between these two roles, but know that I'm speaking both as a Cambridge resident and as somebody who's worked closely with this Committee over the last eight or nine months, as well as in my new federal role.

The first thing I would say is that you all are not alone in facing this crisis. We see communities all across the United States that are facing high levels of homelessness, people in real life and death crisis every day. The life and death nature of that sometimes gets lost in the policy debates. I just want to kind of ground us in the fact that every day that goes by, we have brothers and sisters dying on the street. That's true in Cambridge. It's true in Boston. It's true in Western Mass and communities across the United States. This is life and death stuff. The other thing I would say is that I do not, at a really fundamental level, I do not believe that homelessness isn't an individual failure. I believe it is a societal failure. Do people make bad choices? Sure. Have I made bad choices? Sure. Do people wrestle with mental health issues, or substance use, or loss of a job or a medical catastrophe? Absolutely, but not everyone who goes through those crises ends up homeless. There are a lot of risk factors that put some folks at higher risk of homelessness than others. We know that people of color are dramatically more likely than their white counterparts to become homeless. That's true in Cambridge as it is across the country. We know that people with disabilities are more likely to become homeless. We know that LGBTQ young people running away from home or aging out of foster care are more likely to become homeless. The structural causes of homelessness are the big picture things. It's housing affordability, it's the wages don't keep up with the cost of housing. It's just that we don't have systems around health care, mental health education, that are taking care of folks that are creating enough equal opportunity for economic advancement and stability and housing. There's a kind of perfect storm of structural causes and individual risk factors that is what determines why and why people become homeless and who becomes homeless. That's the backdrop. On the federal front, we're about to release a federal strategic plan to end homelessness. This happens every few years, a new administration comes in and puts out its plan to end homelessness. We're working on that right now that should come out this summer. It will really dictate and shape a lot of how the

federal government over the next few years allocates resources, promotes priorities, provides technical assistance to communities to do their work well.

A few highlights of that plan I'll give you just like a little preview, and Councillor McGovern you heard this in Washington last week in our panel, a lot of what's in that plan echoes what's in your set of recommendations. I think I want to both acknowledge that you all have been on the right track in terms of alignment with federal priorities and policy. I think that'll serve you well, if you really go down the road of implementing a lot of the strategies laid out in this in this report, one of the key elements of the federal strategic plan is going to be a focus on equity. That's racial equity, gender and sexual orientation, equity, fighting against discrimination based on source of income, based on disability, really looking at all of the intersectional dimensions of equity. It will be, I think the first time in my 27 years working on homelessness, that the federal government has made such a bold statement around centering equity in its homelessness response that's alive and well in this report and certainly in your discourse over the last several months. There will be a very strong emphasis on data and evidence, doing the stuff we know works and scaling that. Really focusing on better real time data that lets us make good policy decisions at the local level and at the national level. I think we've learned a lot around data sharing with regard to COVID. I think that'll serve us well as we get into the conversation about data in the homelessness arena as well. There'll be a strong emphasis on upstream prevention, which is also new, I don't think the previous federal strategic plans those of you who are kind of in the wonky weeds on this stuff, and maybe familiar with those, there's never been a real focus on turning off the faucet. As Councillor McGovern said at the outset, Cambridge has done a great job housing a lot of folks and providing wraparound services for a lot of folks and helping people exit homelessness. At the same time, we see people becoming homeless all the time. It's a really a multi part solution.

One is that you've got to deal with the crisis you have in front of you right now and make sure that those folks who are in a life and death crisis today can exit into stable housing with all of the supports necessary. That's only part of the equation. If we don't actually stem inflow, then we're going to be having this conversation next year and the following, and 10 and 20 years from now. The prevention piece has to be part of our work. Again, that's alive and well in this set of recommendations.

We also are going to focus a lot on the crisis response. Cambridge certainly has unsheltered homelessness, we know that we see it in central square, we see it in Harvard Square, we see it, you know all over the community. We do not have it on the scale that we see in Fresno, California, or Phoenix, Arizona or Seattle, Washington, we don't see the kind of massive tent cities and that sort of thing. Boston has experienced some of this with massive casts over the last several months and has actually put a very strong strategy in place. Maybe some of you that follow this, a good old friend and colleague of mine, Monica Burrell, who many of you know who was Governor Baker's Health Commissioner, was tapped by Mayor Wu in Boston to oversee that encampment response. I think there's a lot to be learned from that even on a small scale in Cambridge. The kind of public health mindset, the desire to connect folks, not just not just sweep away, I think Cameron but actually connect people to a transitional or bridge kind of safe shelter transitional housing option, as they're figuring out the long term permanent housing option. Monica lead a real all hands on deck effort over the last two or three months to clear mess and pass in a way that I think is, for the most part, very humane and very thoughtfully done. I think you all can look across the river on that one and say, what can we learn from that about unsheltered homelessness in Cambridge. We've got an unsheltered kind of crisis response focus.

Then finally, in the strategic plan, you all will see a strong emphasis on housing and supportive services. I'm a very strong believer in housing first, but not housing only right. I mean, some of the conversations we had in this group over the last several months had to do with the breakdown in supportive services in the context of you provide housing for folks, but if there's not good mental health care, good access to substance use treatment, good access to all of the other wraparound stuff, then bad things can happen to

that individual, to the neighborhood they're living in. It just doesn't work well. It's got to be a both ends around housing and services. I think you'll see that in the recommendations as well.

That's the national landscape Councillor McGovern that may have been a little longer than you were hoping for, I don't know maybe a little shorter than you We're hoping for but that's a kind of quick snapshot of where we're heading on the federal front.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: No, thank you for that. It gives us a picture of what's coming and what to pay attention to. It does lead into what, you know this presentation, I will note that you mentioned that there's a lot of crossover between the work that the taskforce did and what's coming out at the federal level, just will point out that we came up with our recommendations first. I assume you stole some of those to bring to the federal level. Kudos for the work of the of the task force. With that, Jeff, why don't you share your screen and on to talking about the actual Cambridge report.

JEFF OLIVET: That sounds good. I'm going to do my best here. I'm trying to do this on an iPad, and I'm not sure how this will play out for you all. But are you seeing? Are you able to see my screen There? **(ATTACHMENT A)** Okay, as I get into it, I'll try to zoom in on the parts that I that I want to focus on, I decided not to do a slide deck, mainly because I really want you all to live with this thing, and to see it and to print it out, and feel it in your hands or look at it on your desktop. I've been a part of a lot of strategic planning efforts over the years. I've seen some plans put to good use. I've seen some go sit on a shelf and collect dust. One thing I was struck by just to be very candid about it, you all many of you were involved with a citywide charrette planning process several years ago in Cambridge around homelessness. It was a great process. I was not actively part of that, but I knew of it. I've read the findings and the recommendations from it. One thing I was struck by was how much we were revisiting some of the same recommendations that came out several years ago. That's not to say the community hasn't done good work. It's just saying there's a lot here, there was a lot in that charrette set of recommendations, I hope this thing will become dogeared, metaphorically and maybe, for real, I hope it really does become a guidepost for you all, as you move your work forward.

I'll just quick very quickly talk about process, this background just kind of lays out some of the contextual issues and a little bit of what we did. This Ad Hoc working group met several times, between about June and September, to look at the issue of homelessness in Cambridge from a lot of different angles, we sent teams out into the community to talk with folks who are unhoused, to do focus groups. We really worked through all of that together to kind of unearth some of the main issues. The report lays out a lot of perspectives from the on house residents themselves, some perspectives from local statewide and national experts, we had come speak to the group and this kind of reflects trends in the field. Then we get to recommendations. And this is the part I'll spend the next few minutes on and then we can open it up to discussion. We arranged the recommendations around what I would say is sort of three, I don't know phases or points of intervention in how we think about homelessness, followed by some cross cutting issues. And then within each of those are these verticals around short term, medium term, and long term. You can see there, on my screen, short term, we think about sort of zero to six months-ish, however, you all want to define that medium term in the next year and a half or so and then longer term one to three years. Beyond three years, it is so hard to predict the future in the context. If you think about, put yourself in 2019 for just a minute, and try to project out the next three years and see if you see how much of that you've got right. I just had this experience with my NCAA bracket trying to predict the next two weeks and I was horrible at it. What you do with this is pick off the things that you can get moving on quickly, try to move a few of those forward, and then lay the groundwork for the medium term and longer term ones, even as you're doing some of the short term. Just knowing that the context is going to change and you're going to have to adapt these you're going to have to strike through one and adapted or pulled something forward or push something out. This is intended to be just kind of a first cut and a roadmap that you all can take and make your own.

Around prevention there's still a lot of resources on the table. I believe the Mayor talked about some of the Cares Act funding or the American Rescue Plan funding. There's still a lot of emergency rental assistance funds and things that can be targeted towards folks most imminent risk. I want to push you all on the early side to develop a comprehensive homelessness prevention strategy. This doesn't mean you're going to solve all of it, but where you really are working across the housing authority, the health systems, bringing in the state around mental health and child welfare and foster care, trying to connect more with the domestic violence system and the criminal justice system. Think about how to really come up with something that's going to be meaningful upstream strategies for turning off the faucet.

In the medium term, really looking at earlier detection of homelessness risk. One thing I want to promote at the national level is better universal screening for homelessness risk and health care and education and some of those other systems so that we are able to target resources earlier. On 1.4 there we have just a broad recommendation that you all will have to figure out the details of, but really increasing the collaboration between the housing system, the healthcare system, and all of the other systems that to me dovetails with 1.2. It takes intentional building of those collaborations and relationships. 1.5 looks at the state services a little more closely around mental health and substance use especially we heard this, in a lot of the interviews with folks, we heard it in our discussions with the Ad Hoc working group, that the mental health and substance use systems just aren't adequate to support the folks who are experiencing homelessness.

Then finally, looking at the point of discharge. I think the fact that you've got Cambridge Health Alliance at this table, it gives you a really good kind of point of contact on that. But we want you to look at discharge from criminal justice, just kids aging out of foster care, things like that.

On the emergency response front, I would call a special attention to 2.1. This notion of creating low threshold 24 hour drop in centers that would also address issues of bathrooms and showers and hygiene storage, which came up over and over places to charge bones and things like that just basic, safe place for people to be out of the elements out of the I don't want to say out of the public eye just because but you know, it's my experience talking with a lot of folks who've been homeless. They don't generally they don't want to be sitting out in Harvard Square. I mean, some might on a nice day, like any of us might on a nice day. People want and need a safe place to go be. That was what was the spirit behind 2.1 2.2 was really looking at making sure that the shelters we have are low threshold that they can meet the needs of people who may not be ready to deal with their substance use issues, who may have pets with them who may have other barriers that are keeping them from getting into the shelter options that exist. I would challenge you to think about that.

Now I'll go back to the kind of medium and long term, there was a notion of trying to increase weekend hours for services, and longer, much longer term explore the feasibility of supervised drug and alcohol consumption sites if and when law allows that. That's a little bit of kind of crystal ball on that one, but there's certainly a movement towards safe injection sites and safe places for people to not die while they're drinking or using drugs. That's an uncomfortable concept for a lot of us. It's uncomfortable, certainly for those in law enforcement and many of the conversations I've had. These harm reduction strategies can be very effective at one major thing and that is keeping people alive until they're ready to be sober. I've had friends in recovery say you can't get sober if you're dead. When we think about harm reduction, whatever that looks like, whether it's a syringe exchange or supervised places for people who are intoxicated, it is truly about keeping people alive and offering a space of engagement for folks so that they can begin a recovery journey.

I'm not going to just for the sake of time, I'm not going to hit on all of these, but let me just sort of call out a few others. In the left hand column there you'll see the increase of housing navigators working with

Cambridge Police Department, and the CPD has been very involved in this process, as you can see what the commissioner on this call and thank you, Commissioner for your involvement and that of your team. Really looking at a couple of things around policing, you'll see some here, a point to 2.9 down there at the bottom. Also looking at non police crisis response teams and I just read something yesterday about incredibly effective model that the city of Denver is scaling up around mental health outreach teams, and we've seen this over the years in communities across the country where it's not always the police who are called first when there's a mental health crisis or a crisis with someone who's homeless that police certainly can play a very strong role in that, but there's often a need for non-police Crisis Response Teams. 2.7 and 2.8 talk about kind of street outreach and different coordinated multidisciplinary service models y'all can read. That down under permanent solutions at the bottom of the page. This gets to be the bigger harder stuff really around scaling up permanent supportive housing and developing a comprehensive plan to increase the stock of affordable housing, that's 3.7 and 3.8. In the short term, if you look over to the left on 3.1 3.2, this is about distributing the EHV is the emergency housing vouchers that the Administration released under the all of the COVID related relief money, getting those out in a thoughtful way as possible so that they reach those most in need. Then 3.2 is really around the wraparound supports. 3.4 talks about more public awareness and the issue of framing homelessness in a disaster response framework came up a lot from this group, I remember, in our individual interviews, two or three of you who are on this call, talking about reframing the issue for the general public and for policymakers.

I'll just hit on a couple of things under cross cutting strategies. You all are our smart and avid readers, you can dive back into a lot of these others. Sorry, before I leave the permanent solutions 3.3 talks about direct cash transfer programs, that is a cutting edge very effective strategy that communities around the country are beginning to move toward. I know Y2Y in Harvard Square is already involved in big cash. I would recommend the scaling up of those kinds of approaches. 4.1 talks about engaging people with lived experience of homelessness 4.2 talks about better streamlining and coordination of community meetings and groups. 4.3 says make this Ad Hoc group permanent, I would say permanent until we don't need it anymore. The middle column talks about some city structures that you all can consider around an office of homelessness response, a point person homelessness czar kind of position. 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9 are really much bigger picture things around regionalization. Eliminating racial equity, racial inequities, and then engaging the universities and biotech. I wouldn't wait too long on these, I think 4.7 and 4.8, in particular need attention now. It's a much longer term set of solutions that need to be put in place on that. I'm going to pause there, there's a lot in here, happy to drill back down on any of it or hear from you all with your questions and comments. Many of you had a very strong hand in creating these, I hope I represented it well. In my comments now, I hope our team representative well, in how we wrote up the report. Like any set of recommendations, these are imperfect, and they are only as good as what you do with them. The real implementation of it is in your hands. I've got a lot of confidence in the skill, passion, compassion that I've seen in this group. You're already doing so much. It's a question of not just doing more, but doing it in a way that's targeted at real solutions, and that's what we tried to lay out in these recommendations.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you, Jeff. What I noticed in this is just what you had mentioned earlier that there are going to be some things that are in the immediate column that may actually take a little longer and there are some things in the longer term that we're actually already on our way, in doing so some of this was going to kind of be fluid, but I appreciate that. I want to go to members of the committee first. That's Vice Mayor Mallon, Councillor Toner, Councillor Zondervan. I don't think Councillor Azeem has joined us. Then to non members, if you have questions, please sort of raise your hand in the little thing there. Jeff, you can certainly answer these questions. I also want to make sure that you know, the folks, Cassie and Kate and others who were part of the landmark who were part of the community members that were part of the committee. Also, if you feel like you want to chime in on any of the questions and answered any of the questions, please just raise your hand and I'll call on you. I have the Vice Mayor first, Madam Vice Mayor.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA MALLON: Thank you, Mr. Chair through you. Thank you, well to you. Thank you for all your work on this and to everybody who participated in this Ad Hoc committee. I had a couple of questions. Thanks to Jeff for being here tonight and for all of his work and congratulations on your new job. It was great to see you in DC. My two questions are in terms of keeping the Ad Hoc committee going, is that something that you Councillor McGovern are going to be reconvening, continuing to do?

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: I would very much like to, we were talking about how best to do that. Is that something that sort of happens through this process of the Human Services Committee and bringing everybody together? Or does it still stand alone as a separate entity, but I think it's important that we keep our eye on the prize here, and we keep moving. I think a lot of times with task forces, we sort of do this little piece of work, and then they go away. Then like Jeff said, sometimes the report sits on a shelf. Reconvening everyone to, you know, keep pushing and keep advocating and keep moving this forward, I think will be important. So that is certainly something I hope we do.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA MALLON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. then this leads me into my next question, which Jeff mentioned, hiring a homelessness star. I think you mentioned Monica Burrell at the beginning, not that that's her title in Boston. But certainly, she's somebody who's convening everybody together to work on the crisis that is happening at Mass and Cass, and moving forward. are we thinking about hiring someone like a Monica Burrell to kind of I know, we have a lot of people on this call that work very, very hard on homelessness issues and housing issues. Do we need somebody you know, the Ad Hoc committee did they was that one of their bigger recommendations is like, we really need to hire somebody that is going to like capture this, own this and drive this process. I mean, we can have an ad hoc group, and it can go on kind of, and do the work. At the end of the day, it does seem like we need someone in the city who this is going to be their job.

JEFF OLIVET: Yeah, and I don't want to discount the amazing work that's already going on. I mean, I see Liz Mengers here with Continuum of Care. I know, Ellen and her department do so much work on this, the faith community representatives, you see here already doing so much work on this the provider community, represented by Cassie and others, like there's so much happening. One thing that I've seen in communities across the country is when there is a singular point person, who is both empowered to really create change, and held accountable for that change. Given the resources to do it, I mean I guess that's the other the other piece of this, but you know, who can really not just kind of try to coordinate all the pieces that are there, but really drive implementation of this set of strategies, for example. I think it can be very effective. Again to go back to the Dr. Burrell example, I don't know what her long term charges in Boston, I know what her short term charge was, which was figure out Mass and Cass in a humane way that, that it's figured out solutions, you know, no response is perfect. What I've seen them do over the last three months is kind of extraordinary. We're looking at models like that around the country. It may even be that what you're talking about is not necessarily the permanent, you know, Director of homeless stuff in the community, but a really time limited thing with a very particular charge on implementing a set of strategies that are in this plan. That person has to be both empowered in the sense of having the ear of the City Manager, the City Council, the department heads, the Police Department, etc. Also the respect of those groups to kind of come along in a common direction together and find compromise where there's potential dissension, and then the resource issues a big one, like if you're really going to do all this stuff in this plan, some of that can be done with current resources. Certainly the all of the money flowing down from Washington right now is a kind of extraordinary moment in time that won't last long. Making the best use of that, it has a time limited nature to it as well. I'm not sure what the solution is for Cambridge on this. You asked Councillor Mallon, it was this a kind of strong or high priority recommendation of the committee. I wouldn't say it was the highest but it kind of kept coming up. It kind of kept coming up that

we need better coordination, we need a more kind of centralized community wide response on this. The reason we put it in there was because it kind of kept coming up.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Madam Vice Mayor, I see that Mark McGovern, who was on the panel raised his hand, and Kate and Cassie as if as two of the other sort of frontline folks if you want to chime in on whether or not you think this is would be helpful. Mark, why don't you go ahead. But you're muted, sir.

MARK MCGOVERN: Thank you, thank you. I'd figure that out. this is very sad for me. I've been in my role in Cambridge for 34 years in June, we once had a coordinator of Homeless Services in Cambridge who you could call that the homelessness is our Phillip Mangano. It was a part time job. That part time job he had has turned out over the years to be a tremendous amount of staff, Department of Human Services staff, Liz Mengers is, if I were going to have a homeless czar in the City, she would be my homeless czar. It's just sad to be thinking 34 years later, that we've come back to it, even though the city has put in tremendous resources, and many more staff, and certainly Liz's group is missing some folks now and could use a lot more help. It's hard to, it's just really sad for me. I just wanted to say that the problem has just gotten bigger and bigger when we all started this work, thinking it was an emergency that we would respond to and it would, people would, federal government, state government would step up and solve it. And it hasn't happened. I just want to acknowledge that sadness.

MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you Mark, Cassie.

CASSIE HURD: I just want to push back and be clear that the process the city of Boston pursued, where they forcibly cleared encampments, and the community members who lived at the Newmarket triangle and Atkinson is not a public health strategy. It's being done in cities across the country, and it's nothing to replicate a point in time count was conducted, that's once we've been supporting people through the sweeps that's supposed to support them to get into housing. Most people have not been offered supportive, permanent supportive housing, but low threshold transitional housing, in hotels that's temporary only through June, or non congregate shelter, it's being referred to as housing, it's not. Other people have been pushed to other cities like Cambridge because of the adjacent executive order. I certainly would not look to the plan that has been created by Monica Burrell, in the City of Boston. However, I would support Liz, I think she has, you know, does wonderful work, and would be a great czar if I were to be looking for someone in the city.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: If you think, Cassie, do you think and you know, so you think as a provider, do you think that that that position would be helpful in helping to sort of coordinate and sort of organize? We always talk about Cambridge having a lot of dots and no lines. Do you think that that is a position that we as a Council, and as a City should be thinking about funding? To have or at least empowering, whether that's Liz or someone else to sort of do that work as sort of pull people together and coordinate people better? Do you think that would be helpful as a provider?

CASSIE HURD: I certainly think Liz already does that somewhat, but it's under resourced. I wonder what the description and duties of the job would be that is beyond what is happening or how services could be better connected. I'm uncertain if it actually necessary or if there's, I think Liz would probably be like the most knowledgeable on if this, would be something that makes the most sense.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVREN: Thank you. Madam Vice Mayor.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA MALLON: Thank you, and thank you to. I just want to go back to what the other Mark McGovern said and how he sad, and I think we all I think everybody on this call probably feels the same way. Maybe not as deeply as the people that do this work each and every day. I work in

food insecurity and certainly, you know, it's the same, right? Like everybody thought we were going to put these food pantries in in the 70s, and solve hunger and we wouldn't be here. Here we still are. I also wanted to say I have a lot of love for Liz Mengers, having she's an unsung heroine in the City of Cambridge, I think she does a tremendous amount of work, and if we were going to have a homelessness czar, I would be very in favor of having her in that position. I just want to go back to what Jeff said, which is that person would need to be empowered to create change, accountable to that change, and have the resources to implement those changes. I don't want to I think that we can't overstate that, that if we're going to have somebody who's going to be pulling everybody together, they all have those that's the combination the recipe we should be looking for. I'm going to yield at this time because I see other committee members on, but thank you. I yield back.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you. If folks if you're done speaking if you can just put lower your hand so I don't get confused, too, if you have something new to say. Councillor Zondervan.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON ZONDERVAN: Thank you Mr. Chair, through you. Thanks to all the people who worked on this great report. I want to echo the comments by Vice Mayor and Mr. McGovern about feeling sad. I don't work in this area, But it's just mind boggling to me that we're still here, having these conversations. What I think is really great about this report is that it highlights some new things that haven't been tried before, or maybe haven't been tried enough. Clearly, if we don't want to be stuck in this place forever, we got to try some new things. One of those is the direct cash assistance. I just wanted to ask a little bit more about that. Now with the ARPA funding, it seems like we're just primed set up to do this. Is that true? If so, how, how quickly, can we get this going?

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: I know that many of us attended a big cash workshop, for lack of a better term that they did, or probably I don't know, two to three weeks ago. They talked about this and really setting up a way to do direct cash payments. I don't know, Ellen, I know you're going to do your presentation in a few minutes that are that we'll talk about kind of things that we're thinking about in terms of these recommendations and sort of moving forward. I don't know if that's part of, I looked at the slides, I can't remember. I don't know if that was part of your, do you want to comment or?

ELLEN SEMONOFF: I can comment briefly and then we can come back later. What we were coming to talk about is actually the stuff that's in place right now. What's already based on these recommendations, what are we already doing? What's particularly of the short term, but frankly, of some of the medium and long term? What's actually in the queue to happen? I thought we were coming forward. We can certainly talk more tonight about Bay Cash, as you're saying, but I wouldn't say that we came tonight to talk about that 60 person pilot that Bay Cash is going to do and lots of incredibly thoughtful work with Annette enhanced youth about how they thought this should happen, along with the service providers about it. The question of whether that's something that we should be expanding right now, here, is certainly a question we need to talk about, as opposed to I'm not saying it shouldn't be, I'm just saying that it isn't something that we came prepared tonight to say, yes, we're in the process of starting a Bay Cash program, a larger a cash program, than the one that wide wise working on right now.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Councillor?

COUNCILLOR QUINTON ZONDRVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair to you. I appreciate that. I guess, I don't know, this is so urgent. I don't understand why we're not already doing it or, closer to doing it. I'll wait to hear more in the presentation.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: I think you're right, that you know, it's something that Jeff talked about earlier. There's multiple things that that we have to do, and part of it is turning off the faucet. Right? I think Jeff, that's what you said in DC. That was the phrase you use, because it is true that, you

know, we do a lot that those 500 folks that are unhoused in Cambridge, and that number kind of stays the same and every count, those are not the same 500 folks, and some of them aren't many of them aren't too many of them are. That numbers never decreasing because we're not so many people are entering and so direct cash payments and ways to you know, prevent people from being homeless from becoming homeless in the first place it has to be seen as an emergency as well or that that numbers is never going to change and will likely just continue to grow. We did file a policy order about that Councillor Zondervan, so I'm hoping Mr. DePasquale, the City Managers on the call, so hopefully, we'll get that report back in short, short order. Do you have any other comments Councillor?

COUNCILLOR QUINTON ZONDRVAN: All set for now.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you. Okay. Is there any other Councillor who is not on the Committee who would like to ask a question of Jeff. I know Jeff has to bolt in just a little bit. The other taskforce members obviously will stay. Councillor Carlone.

COUNILLOR DENISE CARLONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a great conversation, I didn't participate in the Committee, I've done quite a bit of affordable housing. I know this is a very specific question, but what is the ideal size number of units with professionals and structures? That always struck me, and I could be way off on this, that you really want a series instead of one key location, a series of smaller buildings throughout the community so it doesn't get labeled, if you will, as readily? Is there some research? For some reason, I keep thinking it's 12 units, but I might be making that up.

JEFF OLIVET: Councillor are you asking about permanent housing?

COUNCILLOR DENISE CARLONE: Yes, I think everybody on the Council probably in the city wants more permanent housing has some is coming forth. Sprinkling it, I think is better for everybody, including the residents to feel part of a bigger community. Is that true? Or am I making that up?

JEFF OLIVET: Well, I think you make a good point, that's probably even a little bit more generalizable. I think I'll go back to the emergency response part, which was in section two of the recommendations, I believe. I would decentralize the drop-in centers, both for the ease of use and access for people who are accessing services there, and to just sort of decongest the concentration of where services are being provided. On the housing side, I was really struck in our work together over the last few months, the lack of congregate, permanent housing options. What we see is people totally in what would be called scattered site housing, where you've got a voucher and you go rent it or maybe a program rents on someone's behalf. In the housing first world over the last 20 years of the kind of programs around the country that have modeled, how do you do good supportive housing, there's been a real debate between scattered site where one person per unit wherever in the community, wherever we can make it work, wherever they can afford it, wherever a landlord will take a voucher, etc. Versus congregate setting where there might be an affordable housing development of 100 units, 200 units, larger scale with services on site, and a real kind of sense of community build. To me, this is an arbitrary distinction. It's an unnecessary dichotomy. I think we need lots of options for people, and that there should be a whole lot of personal choice and that some people want to live in community with others, who have gone through similar experiences, whether that's the young person who's exiting foster care, or a veteran who's returned from service or people who have exited violent relationships. Other people want nothing like that. They want to just be in a place out in the community. I think the longer-term question for you all to wrestle with is, what is the mix of scattered site permanent supportive housing that's affordable, that's really long term where services can be more kind of mobile and that sort of thing with some range of congregate site housing with services on site and kind of real efforts to build community. In terms of the sweet spot around size part of that's just contextual for the communities. I mean, I mentioned that 100 and 200 person, housing developments, the places that come to mind for me on that are Salt Lake City in Denver, where that's been done really well. Seattle, Washington has done a lot of that. New York City has not

done a lot of that they've done have they've done a lot more scattered site stuff. There are places like Albuquerque, New Mexico that have 25 or 30 person developments or motels that were kind of taken over and converted to more kind of SRO, single room occupancy kinds of housing. What I would, I'm not sure there's a right answer, I think Cambridge has to figure out given neighborhood given housing stock, given the financial complications of all that what the right mix is, but I think you're your first point Councillor, is that scattered throughout the community, not just for the sake of the neighbors and nimbyism, but for the sake of folks having some choice in where they live. I mean, I talked with folks who are from Central Square, they don't want to live in North Cambridge they're from, from the port or whatever, it's a real, it becomes a real barrier to folks. I think creating a wider spectrum that is spread across the community that allows for, ultimately for real individual choice and what's going to work for people, I think that's the right kind of long-term strategy takes a lot to get there. That's a 5 or 10 year plan, not a not a two or three year plan.

COUNCILLOR DENISE CARLONE: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Before I go to Mark, when we go back to the drop in center idea, one of the things that we talked about was there's this question of do we have one center somewhere sort of centrally located, or do we have smaller ones and I will point out there are a lot of services already for church and, Casper program, and On the Rise, that are open during the day, but we could then, if the city could help fund them to renovate their space, or fund them to hire more staff. I mean there's already, we don't have to recreate this wheel, but it is sort of interesting, where you have, you know, even within a small city like Cambridge, you do have that. There are some folks who are unhoused and I wife who don't come to Central Square, right, and probably wouldn't come to Central Square, if the day drop-in center was in Central Square, there are some folks in Central Square who wouldn't go to Alewife if we put it up there. Having that sort of spread out where people could feel more comfortable, because that's their neighborhood, that's their community, I think it's similar to the housing aspect that you bring up Councillor. Mark, do you have a thought?

MARK MCGOVERN: I do. I was struck by just comments. It's really very similar to substance use disorder treatment, it's a goodness of fit. Housing is the same way. It's a goodness of fit. How do we get and we don't have the congregate housing option currently in Cambridge, we're hoping to get some soon. What a wonderful thing to be able to do to have a congregate housing setting, with some staff there at least somebody during the day and evening, who's there who can help direct people, help advise people during the day or night. It's such a great option. Other people who don't fit that who want something else, that's the way it is now. I mean, we see people moving, I've seen people move into luxury apartments and completely be out of their element, move from the tracks behind Albany Street into a luxury apartment, near Lechmere Station, and just be like, oh my goodness, what has happened to me. So that goodness of fit between what somebody needs, what they and what they want. It's also a little tricky deciding between what somebody what somebody wants, and this is from the expression boots on the ground, somebody who states, I want this, but they really aren't ready for that. I've known this person for all of these years, and I'm working with this person, and trying to get this person to acknowledge that this is really going to be a struggle for you if you do this. You give someone a chance to move into that space, but don't lock them into that space. Allow them to succeed, or fail in that space, and move to a different one. Don't just say, you've moved into here and you've lost this opportunity now you go back to square one. You're able to move from here to there to find the space that suits you. I know I do that in my housing. I've lived in multiple places that haven't suited me and I've had to move on. I think that's an important thing to acknowledge as well.

JEFF OLIVET: I think Mark, you make a really good point that I want to kind of tie back to the recommendation around engaging with people with lived experience. We attempted to do that in this in this kind of information gathering process. It was imperfect. It was too fast and too little, but it was at

least an effort to try to let these recommendations be shaped by people who are most proximate to the issue as Bryan Stevenson would say. You got to do that around figuring out this housing stuff also, really engage. I know there was some representation of folks who had been homeless on this Committee. Not enough. If you all carry this Committee forward, I would recommend you set a minimum for racial makeup of this Committee and lived experience on this Committee. I'd be happy to talk about that further how I've seen communities do that and kind of really make sure there's good representation in a way that that shapes the solutions going forward.

I also want to go back to something that Cassie said earlier, Cassie, thank you for challenging me on the Mass and Cass situation. I'm watching that from afar at this point, and trying to see what's working and what's not. I appreciate the gut check on that. On that, whatever Cambridge decides to do around unsheltered homelessness, and again, I know it's not encampment on the scale that Boston has seen, or the San Francisco or LA have seen. Whatever you all decide to do around that, it's got to be a very thoughtfully done thing that brings the providers to like Cassie to the table, the faith community like Kate and other faith leaders to the table, folks who have who are living outside right now. Make sure that whatever happens around that is done in a way that is humane, that attends to people's civil rights and human rights, and that is focused on solutions. That's not just trying to kind of sweep the problem from view. That's, that's certainly not effective. Cassie, I just wanted to say thank you for calling me out on that.

I also want to go back to Mark McGovern's existential crisis a few minutes ago, after 34 years in the field, Mark, I'm right behind June 27, I think is our 28th this year. You and I have known each other for many of those years. I'm sad too, I hate that we're having to have these conversations, and yet we are. It's because we're up against forces larger than any of us on forces larger certainly than any of the folks who are experiencing the tremendous horrors of life on the street. We're up against macro economic factors, cost of housing, and Cambridge as you all well know, is out of control. Yet, we got to do the work. If you're feeling overwhelmed by all this, sit with that for a minute, and then get over it and take a bite, and let's go. That's partly pep talk to Mark, who I know keeps coming at it every day. To all of us, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. It's the longer you're kind of engaged in these conversations, the more it's easy to sort of feel like, oh this is just always going to be with us. I don't believe that. I don't believe that homelessness is inevitable. We're smart people with a lot of resources in this community and across this country. I believe we can figure this out, I don't think we have to live in a society where homelessness is okay. I just want to encourage you all to sort of hunker down, sit with your sadness, sit with your overwhelm for a day, and then move through it because there's still work to be done.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: I would say, and this is something that the communication I mentioned earlier from Theresa Cardosi who's I don't know if she signed up for public comment, but she's in the meeting. One of the recommendations that was I can't remember if it was in the longer term or the medium, but was the education piece, and I actually think that that is something that needs to be, and I'm actually working on this now. I've had fits and starts I'm trying to get this going of a really a homeless education campaign in the City of Cambridge. It's not focused on someone telling their story about necessarily about their, what they're experiencing on the street, although that could be part of it. But who are they? Right? What did you want to be when you were 10 years old? Right? What happened? Until when we went to, a number of us went to Montreal to look at safe consumption sites, and in addition to how far ahead they were in Canada in terms of seeing addiction as a health crisis, and not a criminal crisis, they were even further ahead in educating their citizens around who these folks are and why it's a public health crisis. Which made it easier for them to locate safe consumption sites in certain neighborhoods. If we're going to be doing, we're going to be talking about multiple sites, whether it's de dropped and centers or housing, we've got to do an educational campaign so that people in Cambridge really do understand who we're talking about here. We know ultimately, everyone will say, and Councillor Carlone, I agree with it with him, that everyone in this community will say, yes, we have to do

something to support the unhoused people in Cambridge and then we will propose building 12 units in a certain neighborhood and let's see how fast those people find reasons not to support that. Part of that is because we don't do enough education around who these folks are. That's happening now. Putting that together, but and we'll call it be calling on a lot of you to help. That has to be a big part of this too, because we have to change people's mindset if we're going to then do the other things we need to do to move this forward. Alright, so I want to be mindful of time we're, we started a little late. Any last questions for Jeff? Jeff, I know you have to you have to take off. Then we're going to go to Ellen, you're going to do the presentation, or is Liz going to do it?

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: Lori is the presentation ready?

ELLEN SEMONOFF: If we're ready to pull it up, Paula. Marc, do you want to say anything else for Jeff?

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVREN: Jeff? Yeah. Thank you, Jeff. Thank you, thank you so much. Also congratulations in your new in your new role. It was nice to see a Cambridge guy represented on the stage there in NLC. I'll say this real quickly before, maybe you want to comment on this real quick before you leave. As to Councillor Carlone's question about building more housing and sort of where does that go, and how do you do that? One of the other things that you talked about and NLC talked about was actually really trying to work with landlords in a better way around, you know, there are a lot of communities that are supplementing the voucher rents so that landlords aren't losing money by taking a voucher. They're offering landlords insurance policies on their property so that if somebody damages, there's a lot of reluctance from landlords to rent to anybody who hasn't been through this so much discrimination. Even more so for folks who are unhoused with a voucher. Anything real quick on that, because that's something we could we should be doing as well.

JEFF OLIVET: Absolutely. With both emergency rental assistance, administration and emergency housing voucher rollout, I think the landlord engagement part of that is huge. National League of Cities has a national initiative around this that I understand involves kind of peer to peer learning among cities. It's got to be part of a solution, and if the if our set of recommendations was weak on that, consider that one of the, the flaws in it and added in under the permanent solutions bucket or whatever, I think it's a really good point. I'll just say a word of gratitude. I'm really grateful to all of you who have put so much time into this process for Mayor Siddiqui and Councillor McGovern, in really driving it. Madam Vice Mayor, I didn't mean to demote you earlier by calling you Councillor, it was great to see you in DC the other day, too. Alanna, Marc, and I had a really lovely time in this very fancy hotel lobby, not only talking about homelessness, but also about Cambridge Little League Baseball, and Girls Softball, so that felt really like a good taste of home here in Washington, DC. Thank you all very much for your good work. I look forward to seeing you around Cambridge and hearing about your great work going forward. Keep doing it. Keep doing the stuff that works and scaling it up. I think to Councillor Zondervan's point earlier, try some new things, because we've not figured this out yet. We figured out pieces of it, but the comprehensive solution has eluded us to now. You build on the stuff that's working, do more of that. Then ultimately, you try some stuff you got to be creative, you got to be ambitious, and move in some new directions to get new results. Thank you all. Thanks for letting me be with you again tonight and look forward to crossing paths again.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you, Jeff. Alright, Ellen.

ELLEN SEMONOFF: Thank you Councillor McGovern and to Jeff for the wonderful job that he did in leading this process. I'm going to kick it off, and then I'm going to hand it off to two different people. (First, to talk a little bit about prevention side to Maura Pensak, who's the City Manager's Housing Liaison, and then to Liz Mengers to talk about the next step. (ATTACHMENT B) Let me just set the

context for what's here, we were focused first, but not in the rest of our presentation on the short term recommendations. As Jeff and I discussed at some point, some of the short term recommendations may actually be slightly longer term, and some of the longer term recommendations may actually be things, and I think you said that as well Councillor McGovern, that actually we're able to move on more quickly or we've already have begun to work on. The green dots, just to make this easy, our work that's already happening. Either Liz or Maura will describe more about that. The blue dots are things where we expect the work to move forward with our partners in the very near term, but we didn't want to say it's actually in process. The other things that aren't dotted here and let me call out the one that I think is perhaps certainly, we talked about the creation of the low threshold 24 drop in centers. I just want to be clear, and it was interesting to hear you talk about tonight, the idea that can the City support the existing day programs, existing programs to be able to expand their services. I know, as you know, that's something we've done with Kate's program in providing day support since the close to the beginning of the pandemic. That certainly, that conversation is a conversation we need to engage in. We didn't want to put a dot there to suggest that it's actually already happening. These are the categories within the report. We will talk more, Maura will talk about homeless prevention related work. Liz is going to talk about both in the short term in the longer term recommendations to work around emergency response and permanent solutions, and then about cross cutting strategies. With that, I'm going to first turn it over to Maura to walk us through the next slide, and then it will go to Liz.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you, Maura.

MAURA PENSACK: I'm really pleased that we are talking about homeless prevention. I think oftentimes when we think of housing work in homelessness are in two separate buckets, and they're very much intertwined. The other thing that I really want to point out is that we often think when we think of homelessness prevention, we think in terms of financial assistance, but it really takes a lot of other strategies. I think some of our current and recent prevention work really has set the stage for developing even a deeper comprehensive plan that comprehensive prevention and diversion plan as we move forward in some of this work.

The four areas, as you can see, that we've highlighted for tonight are the financial issues, financial assistance, but also addressing non financial concerns. Also then connecting to find bundling with long term ongoing solutions. If we are offering, for instance, financial assistance, but it doesn't stop that short term assistance, but that we connect it to those long term ongoing solutions. Then also, I think Councillor McGovern mentioned this, and I think we need to talk more about this is that rich in education. Well, where are those resources, how to connect to the services, and how to enter the search working done, and we often think that everyone knows how to connect to us, but we want to make sure no one falls through the cracks. To that end, just real quickly, in terms of financial assistance, what we've been doing and make sure making sure that there is continued availability of funds, as well as access to those funds. In availability, I think, as most people know, here that city rental assistance funds have been increased over the past couple of years. That's mostly administered through the multi service center. Also, please continue the implementation of the housing stabilization program, which is a short term subsidies stipend, it's really kept a number of people flow the past couple years, and that's a program that's really been meaning to Cambridge. Then that's also coupled with the ongoing state mornings that, we're lucky in Massachusetts now, when so a lot of work to be done. There are a lot of resources and the residential assistance to families in transition, which also assist individuals has been in persons since 2002 through the state and that money that line items has just increased over the years. We want to make sure that means continues to be available to all of our residents. It can be available, and it can be difficult to access, especially in the past couple of years here, everything has been online. For some people that makes it easier for many it doesn't. To admit the service center, into my office, we really continue to offer direct service assistance, to complete applications to help people walk through getting the documents and getting that assistance. We've also continued to coordinate with the many nonprofits because there's a lot

of other flexible funds out there. Sometimes we have to bundle the different resources to make some hole. In terms of addressing non financial concerns, we have to see increased capacity for case management that intensive case managers the wide offers. We've also expanded to the multi service center housing search, and that both for to nonprofit providers, as well as city staff, and that's, again, connecting someone very directly to the long term solutions. We're also working to actively to expand the capacity for hoarding intervention, which is a very, some people are aware of some people are surprised to hear this, but quite a phenomenon. It's been around for many, many years. It's probably the second reason for evictions, second biggest, most usual reason for someone being evicted, because affording health and sanitation and so that's something that we city has been very involved with. There are these nonprofit that provides direct services, intervention, and we're looking to expand that and to also bring back the coordinated network.

Then in terms of long term, ongoing solutions, we have been able to work closely with reason continuum of care, and DHSP to access 35 of the emergency housing vouchers. Twenty-five of those were in the first kind of allocation, and that started in November. Today about all 23 people have been housed, and two are looking on process. We're also now moving towards getting 10. Technically, the other 10 badges administered and distributed to other folks, most of those vouchers have gone to folks who are elders who are extremely at risk for housing buildings have been so long since the buildings have been solved. They don't have resources. This is really kind of prevented them from sliding into the safety net of shelters.

Then finally, we've where we've been working on outreach and education, Collaboration of the DHSP, CPD, Human Rights Commission, Social Workers, feel like I'm leaving someone out. The house in Cambridge campaign, which has been monthly webinars on many things. Many issues around housing, from eviction prevention, to credit, improving credit score, a lot of templates, webinars, and information are also part of the CPD and scam prevention. As things start to open up, we will be doing more in person work. We have been doing some drop in hours at the library, again, sort of coordinating ourselves so that there's no wrong approach for folks accessing services. Then just a couple of other things. Again, just making sure that materials and information are accessible and available to people. The tenant rating system has been translated into languages. We've implemented the housing rules on webpage so that folks can know again, find more information on the city's website about all different kinds of things around housing and or housing where the resources came. Thank you.

LIZ MENGERS: Thanks for the kind word earlier. I'm going to ask to go to the next slide and I'm going to move on really quickly, because I'm just mindful of time and want to leave the space for comments and conversation. I want to start by highlighting the work related to the emergency housing voucher program, it is referenced in the recommendations. It has been just really a massive part of our work priorities over the last couple of months and I just wanted to give a quick description of what we're doing. It is certainly a work in process. Very exciting work. I tried to pull out on the side, some of the relevant Ad Hoc report recommendations that tie into this work because it touches a lot of the things, we're really already kind of in the weeds with some of the longer term recommendations on a small scale, particularly around pairing vouchers with services funded through multiple streams, such as the See Spec Program, trying to forge new connections with the accountable care organizations. Really coordinating care across housing, health care, and other mainstream services, and just want to acknowledge what significant resources this brings. I think, for so often, for so long homeless housing has been an environment of scarcity. A lot of the systems that we have are picking the most vulnerable people prioritizing the most vulnerable people for very limited housing opportunities. What these vouchers do, it just creates a lot more opportunity. There's a lot of pressure to use them quickly and equitably. We're trying to balance that, the urgency to get the vouchers out the door with the requirements, the regulatory requirements that come with it. The goal is to increase equity and sort of holding those things all at once. Just quickly, the vouchers, the EHV program are part of the American rescue plan, ARPA, that we hear a lot about. The Cambridge Housing Authority was allocated 128 vouchers. Then we formalized the partnership through a memorandum of

understanding which was a requirement in order to access the vouchers between the Cambridge Housing Authority, the continuum of care, and transition house, which is the victim service provider, that's also able to send referrals.

I will take just a really quick minute to talk about the COC and define what it is for folks on the call who might not be familiar. It is a competitive federal grant program called the COC Program. It's also essentially an administrative entity and the City of Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs serves as the collaborative applicant for the COC. We'll see that term throughout this update here. It comes with a lot of regulatory requirements around data collection, reporting, governance structure and on and on. The EHV program it requires referrals to go to the housing authority from the COC's Coordinated Entry System. The Coordinated Entry System is a federal mandate, it is designed to create more equity and access to housing. There's a standardized assessment process and referral procedures in order to say we're sending referrals to the housing authority for these vouchers. This EHV program has required us to really scale up our coordinated entry system quite significantly, in in very short time to serve broader eligibility groups. The at risk population that Maura spoke about earlier, is really just a higher volume. Part of the work that we've been doing is really expanding the funding for housing navigation and stabilization through key partners, HomeStart, Bay Cove, First Church and others, to really support the successful implementation of this voucher program. Trying to really focus on site based navigation so meeting people where they are to get the documents that they need to get a successful application into the housing authority.

I think another big part of it, which has been addressed on in some other parts of the call is also increasing city staffing for the Coordinated Entry System Operations and Management. If you could go to the next slide, please. Here's just some more information and some of the efforts that we have in place to distribute these vouchers quickly and equitably, developing and implementing new procedures, and all of the backend data that's required to meet our regulatory requirements, but also importantly, I think, to go back to something Jeff said earlier, to have the data that we need to be able to be monitoring as close to real time as possible for racial equity and efficiency in our procedures. Really heard and trying to allow for client choice as much as possible, but also acknowledging that in many cases, it's determined you're working on a tight timeline to get the voucher least up once it's issued. That's where the housing navigation and housing search workers do so much incredible work the boots on the ground folks, working with people to find units. I think we're still early in it to be able to understand really where there are opportunities to look at landlord incentives. It is something that I'd really like to prioritize as we move forward and have more data as this continues to roll out.

We are working closely with the Cambridge Housing Authority, we'd have biweekly meetings to monitor progress and are working to identify and share the key data points across our systems to be able to monitor for equity and opportunities for greater efficiency. Also hoping to convene starting, if not in March, definitely hopefully by April, coordinated entry working group whose will represent all of the key stakeholders here to really focus on racial equity person centered interagency care coordination and continuous quality improvement. Also just want to acknowledge and I know, the Housing Authority isn't on the call tonight, but just incredible partnership and the even beyond the EHV program, the CHA committed additional mainstream vouchers for our efforts. Really exciting to be scaling our system up and hopefully rehouse a significant number of people in a short period. Next slide, please.

I wanted to speak a little bit about. I put emergency response and cross cutting strategies together here. Just want to highlight the funding, the ongoing funding support from the city through a variety of different sources. A lot of it is the federal relief funds through the Cares Act. Some of it is City dollars, and some of it hopefully will be ARPA funding, to continue support for Crisis Response projects. The shower services, the portable toilets, medical street outreach, and some of the emergency shelters that are operating right now. As I mentioned before increasing the site and field based housing navigation services to support the implementation of the voucher program. We've been able to add seven new housing

navigator positions since 2021 using a combination of funding sources. I don't want to skip over the fact that hiring for these positions is a challenge. It's very hard work, and just express my gratitude to the people doing this work every day. Also, related to the recommendation in the report to needing more information to inform the true need for how many housing navigators our system needs to add, part of our rollout of the EHV program includes a new phase one assessment, which is basically a much simpler assessment process for our coordinated entry system that is informed by trying to make our system more accessible in the interest of increasing equity. Through that assessment, we're collecting information that will inform what the unmet housing navigation needs are in our system. We have some pending funding recommendations through ARPA to continue and expand the housing navigation and stabilization support.

I've spoken a lot about housing navigation, but stabilization is another key part of this. We're working to ensure that we have transition supports in place as people move out of shelters or unhealthy situations into permanent housing. There's still a lot of work to be done and in terms of how we fully connect all of the dots there, but acknowledging the importance of not only coordinated entry, but coordinated exits out of the system. That's where I think the really hard, but exciting work of coordinating across systems that don't often speak the same language between housing and health care, patients and clients and tenants and, kind of finding a common language to be able to serve our common clients with our shared goals.

One of the recommendations in the Ad Hoc report is related to critical time intervention. I did want to mention that one as a really exciting project that has been in conversation with Healthcare for the Homeless on how we can move forward on that and hope to have budget proposals in place shortly. On the coordination and communication, one thing that we've done in recent months, really primarily in response to the Omicron surge, started initially as weekly meetings between shelter providers and the Cambridge Public Health Department, plus some additional key stakeholders. I think that that's been a really helpful meeting. I know one of the recommendations is to reduce the number of meetings, but in this context, I think it has been something that we'd like to build on to address some of the other recommendations in this report. It's been a great venue to troubleshoot some of the challenges around isolation beds, masking, testing, vaccines. I think that we can build on that group to continue some of the conversations around improving coordination and communication. I think that one of the priorities for my team, my office within DHSP, is working to update our continuum of care, email lists, website and communication strategy. We're doing a better job about communicating the resources that we have in our supporting, to the people who need the app for their either their day to day survival or for their work.

The other one I wanted to highlight was on formalizing opportunities for people with lived experience to shape decisions. We are prioritizing that and working to determine the ways to do that. Within the continuum of care structure, we have a continuum of care board. There's a lot of overlap with members of the Ad Hoc Committee and have had some initial discussions both in the Ad Hoc Working Group and within COC working groups on how that might happen. I just wanted to call that out as I think it was one of the blue dots on the first slide as we don't have it yet, but we are working on it. Similarly on some of the consolidation and coordination, working to develop that list of existing groups, meetings, and participants, as just an initial first step in addressing the recommendation in 4.2. on consolidating and streamlining, various community meetings and groups. I think there are a lot of opportunities to participate, but the information about that is not as centralized as perhaps would be helpful for the broader community. Finally, in conversation with DPW, and the Cambridge Police Department to address the recommendation 2.4 related to items confiscated and making sure that we have consistent information and contact information communicated about how that information can be shared.

On the permanent solutions, again, a lot of this links back to the emergency housing vouchers. The navigation stabilization support, the CTI work, just the vouchers themselves, but also want to call out the work that happens to maintain the funding for the existing permanent supportive housing and rapid

rehousing projects that we already have through the COC program. Just last week, we got our word for the FY21 competition, that brings almost \$6 million to the city for the 2022/2023, operating year. A lot of the recommendations in the ad hoc report, as Jeff highlighted, track with federal funding priorities, and are important for our community, our COCs ability to improve system performance and compete in this in this grant competition for the limited funds through that program.

Also, just wanted to talk briefly, I know that the Housing Authority isn't here, but did want to mention 116 Norfolk Street. That development that the Housing Authority I think has started having some community meetings on. So really exciting project on the horizon where SRO units are going to be converted into studio apartments, and the total number of units will expand I think up to 60 units, about 60 units. That ties into a lot of the work that is ongoing with pairing some medicaid reimburse services, see spec, the community supports for persons experiencing chronic homelessness with housing. Wanted to call that one out there. Also through the initial sort of planning discussions with the housing authority, they anticipate using our coordinated entry system for tenant selection for that building. I know it's a ways away, but work is happening on that. One of the many different housing types that are important to have in our portfolio. Just really excited by the potential for that property to serve some of our longest term homeless folks with dedicated support services that are well funded. I think that's it. Sorry, I was talking really fast. I hope I didn't take too much time.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: It was great. Thank you. I'm looking at the time, we do have about five people who signed up for public comment at three minutes each, which would bring us sort of right up to the seven o'clock and we did start a little late so we could extend for 10 minutes or so. Councillor Simmons has joined us, thank you. Then I would say, if Councillors, since we won't, we may not be able to wrap up all questions tonight, if folks want to email me questions, I can also get answers to questions and then put that in as a communication to the Council on the agenda to keep people informed. We could really be here all night and meet every day to talk about this stuff. Let's go to public comment, make sure folks have their time. When you are called, please state your name, and you will have three minutes. Madam Clerk do you want to?

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: First speaker is Cassie Hurd

CASSIE Hurd: Hi, everyone. I shared some of what I plan to share and public comment. I guess there are two points that I still want to make of that I heard some discussion of potentially continuing the Ad Hoc working group, and I appreciated Jeff sharing the need to expand the number of unhoused community members at the table. There's only been two members of the 25 member task force that were currently or previously unhoused in Cambridge. People shared the process for engagement beyond these two community members was high barrier and transactional. It asked about people's experiences in an exploitive way. It didn't ask for their solution. One organizer who participated referred to the working group as an illusion of participation, and the priorities and goals did not come from unhoused people, but instead, sort of the folks who have been planning it. People wanted me to share that unhoused committee members are not a monolith and have unique needs and should be the majority of every table or homelessness is being discussed and decisions are being made, and that every recommendation of the city report and the city is moving more forward with should follow the self identified needs of community members and include their meaningful engagement through the planning and implementation. When services are implemented, be accountable to unhoused community members. Then I also want to emphasize the importance of the 24 hour dropping spaces and how they're designed, implemented and operated, I heard that there may be more than a few, which I think would be wonderful. Community members have shared the importance of subspaces and being low threshold not run by the police or the business improvement district. That these spaces should also be meaningful for people to spend time and access resources and support. Beyond bathrooms, showers, storage for belongings and phone charging stations, all of which are valuable, and want to be clear that these drop in spaces shouldn't be used as a

means to move people along by police off the streets. Qanted to share how organizers have described low threshold housing versus what was shared and report. To people well, threshold housing means more than accommodating couples and pets which the report cited. Although people in these circumstances should absolutely be able to access housing. We're also describing an environment does not rely on requirements for entry beyond the necessary no surveillance or punitive policies, and that the police in policing entities like private security or the bed should not be present. People should be able to use alcohol or other substances should not be policed in ways that any of us would be policed in our own homes. That low threshold housing would actively work to minimize barriers, which I know isn't others are working on and understands relationship building is key to the health and safety of everyone. Thank you.

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: The Next speaker is Rachel Bolton.

RACHEL BOLTON: Hi, my name is Rachel Bolton and I'm the Program Outreach Organizer at the Material Agent Advocacy Program. I am also part of the unhoused advocacy group, which we are a coalition of organizations that work directly with empath's folks in Cambridge. On behalf of the Coalition I want to address and highlight two overlaps between the Ad Hoc homelessness report recommendation and our one has to advocacy groups are pressed for funds in our 2021 letter. We agree with the reports assertion that homelessness is a life and death crisis. Cambridge can act quickly on the report's recommendations by investing in the UH use request housing and health care, which are evidence based solutions to homelessness and substances. We want to elevate our proposal because we believe that the overlap between the report's recommendations, and the enhanced advocacy groups for press reveal a consensus among people who are unhoused, service providers, consultants ,and city employees. The consensus is that Cambridge needs to invest in housing and health care that meets people's needs. First, we want to thank the city for allocating ARPA funds to higher housing navigators. We recognize that this also fulfills recommendation 2.3. This will positively impact the enhanced community. However, Cambridge needs to invest in more of our affordable housing units in order for the housing navigators to be the most effective recommendation, 3.7 echoes this call. The UHA has a solution. Using ARPA funds, we want to create 35 additional low threshold housing subsidies with four staff members for two years. We want the city to identify a sustained funding source to maintain these subsidies through a city rent subsidy program. Our proposal lays out a pathway to ensure that these units are available to the community and sustained beyond the initial funding. We want to reduce the barriers for people who use drugs and or have mental health concerns to access culturally competent and low barrier healthcare. The report reveals similar goals under recommendations 1.5 and 2.7 respectively. We believe that this can be accomplished through our request to establish an integrated low threshold outreach program similar to that of Boston's care zone plan. In conclusion, we want to actualize the priority set forth by the enhanced community for housing and health care. I also just want to note that I believe Mary Altaf, which is she's one of the taskforce members is next but she cannot make it. Thank you.

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: Thank you. The next speaker is Jim Stewart.

JIM SEWART: Thank you. I want to just echo what Rachel and Cassie have been saying. I think there's an awful lot of overlap between the ARPA plans and what the taskforce has been talking about. I think that it's critical that there be maximum participation and people who will use the services and people who are currently delivering services to the population we're concerned with, so that those proposals can be implemented in a way that makes the maximum, creates the maximum good for everybody concerned. I hope that the Human Services and Veterans Committee will use its good office to try to ensure that that participation takes place that when these things are implemented, they do all the good that we want them to do and just want to make sure I register my participation in the Liz fan club. Thanks, Liz.

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: The next speaker is Mary Altaf. I do not see her on the attendees list, but I do have one phone number.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Rachel had said that Mary couldn't join us.

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: Okay, so the next speaker is Banti Gheneti.

BANTI GHENETI: Hello, my name is Banti. I'm a resident of Cambridge, I live at 17 Pleasant Place. I wanted to firstly, thank everybody who worked on the report I there's definitely a lot of good things that are highlighted in it, including providing more wraparound services, drop in centers, and focusing on harm reduction strategies. I wanted to firstly support some of the comments. Other people giving public comment had already said, I think definitely having more members of the unhoused community be involved in this process dictated how it works. Since this is really about meeting their needs, it will be important going forward. I definitely also wanted to support Cassie's comments around exploring what low barrier resources might actually look like. Then continuing, I liked some of the comments I heard during the presentation on really framing this as a disaster response, because homelessness really is a disaster. How can we be more urgent with this? I know, Rachel had mentioned ways for providing more permanent supportive units through ARPA, that would definitely be great. In addition to that, why does it take so long to house people? Why does it not work for them? Why do they not trust the system? What can the city really do to put all the resources we have behind us? I think short through long term strategies are great, but you know, framing this as a as a disaster where can we put our money? Can we rent units? Can we acquire units? How quickly can we get more caseworkers to help people get the services they need and get housed? Thanks for this work and hoping to see a lot more.

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: The final speaker is Lee Farris.

LEE FARRIS: Good afternoon. This has really been a useful and helpful couple of hours. I hope that the slides will be made available. I think there's some good news amongst what has been discussed today, for example, the hiring of the seven housing navigators. It might be worth the City thinking about trying to see if there's enough good news to make a news article out of it so that the general population knows more about this and also the recommendations of the report. However, I'm also very struck by the remarks of Cassie and others from map and other places that people with lived experience have not been enough involved in the recommendations of the report. I guess I would really hope that before people go farther on trying to implement the recommendations, to figure out a really thorough systematic way to get input from a number of either currently or previously unhoused people on the recommendations. If they have either different recommendations or different prioritizations, I think it's imperative that we find out what those are before we go further down the path of implementing the recommendations from the report. I'll stop there. Thanks everybody for working on this. I hope that we continue to make progress.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: I do want to, just let me quickly sort of address this because it came up a number of times we had three unhoused folks on the Committee, one of whom dropped out and stopped coming to meetings. We did do focus groups and street outreach. We heard from folks, not perfect, not enough. Certainly, as noted in the report, one of the top recommendations was involving people with lived experience more in this process, but I don't want anyone walking away thinking that we did that. We kept people out intentionally or that we didn't try. We had a number of providers who spoke for folks in the unhoused community, because they know they they're with them every day and put opinions forward and strategies for it. I'm not making an excuse. I'm not saying that it was perfect. I'm not saying that we don't have to do more. I don't want people thinking that we somehow didn't take that seriously, because we did and we tried and we have to do better. We got about five minutes. I don't know if there are Councillors that want, again, this is not going to, we're going to have to have more conversations and more opportunities to talk about this. It's not going to all be wrapped up in one

meeting. I didn't know if anybody wanted any of the members of the committee, or Mark one you want to. Mark raised his hand, Mark, go ahead.

MARK MCGOVERN: Yeah, I think it might be a good idea to, we have tried to involve people with lived experience. I think it might be an idea, we think about to have an advisory board made up of people with lived experience. That board can, the membership of that board can come and go as they see fit. We did have a hard time getting in sustaining people who would go through this process with us. I think that speaks to the way the way folks lives are, when you're living that type of life, it's hard to stay in stay in something. I think that might be a good idea. The other thing I wanted to say is there was there was something in the report about health care and accountable care organizations being a part of this, and I just want to say that CHA is care organization does have a very active social determinants of health program that offers help with offers our patients help with food insecurity, housing insecurity, and offers real tangible help with housing, both to prevent people from losing housing and from, and people who have lost their housing to be able to engage with VinFin in a chance to secure housing.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Thank you, Mark. I also just another quick point, I mean, that one of the other problems we had is that this group met from June to September when everything was still virtual. We're sort of coming out of that now. that was also a barrier, which is why we did some of the outreach and the focus groups, because some of us, you know, if you're on house, getting you to get on a zoom call, you know, from five to seven at night, is certainly a barrier. That got in the way, I think for a lot of people and Cassie did yeoman's work with Mary and others that were on trying to help them sort of, you know, deal with the technology barriers, but hopefully we're coming out of that and we can start bringing people together more in person, which I think will make it easier for folks to participate.

I don't want to like just in closing, just sort of want to say to bring some emphasis to the regional aspect of this. The reality is we could build 500 homes tomorrow for those 500 folks that we often refer to. We would still see unhoused folks on our streets, because this is not just a Cambridge issue. It's a national issue, and a regional issue. I'm hoping that we can, I know a lot of the nonprofits talk to each other, but I don't think the government structures talk to each other. Boston does what Boston does and that impacts what happens in Cambridge and what happens in Somerville. There's no conversation between Boston and Cambridge. There's no conversation between Cambridge and Somerville. We need to do much better planning regionally. We need to work together on this issue. I hope that we can do that. Do that as well. All right, we were at seven o'clock, I want to be mindful of people's time. Maura, you want to close us out real quick, I think we can get one minute in before I have to officially extend.

MAURA PENSACK: I just wanted to pick up on what you're saying. Important collaborations have to happen to DMH, DCF, criminal justice system, etc. That was one of the initial, I think both of the Interagency Council, my experience, just being honest with did not really happen in the region here with the chaplain as well, in a good way, other places, maybe, hopefully, that happens, but I think it's often focused on nonprofits, or municipal structures working together, and not the very large systems, and they really need to and they need to do so beyond just funding.

COUNCILLOR MARC MCGOVERN: Great. Thank you. So again, I really want to thank everyone for participating. those of you Kate and Cassie, and mark, and Liz, and those of you who were sort of doing this work, you know, every single day, you know, just thank you, from the bottom of my heart for what you do. it's hard, and it's sad. It's sometimes as we said before, it can feel really demoralizing, but we have to keep, you know, trucking through and pushing that boulder up a hill. With that, again, thank you everyone. This is not the last of this conversation, and I'm looking forward to us taking some real concrete action to address this crisis. The crisis that it is.

With that, Madam Clerk, we need a motion by the Vice Mayor to adjourn.

YEA: COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN, COUNCILLOR TONER, COUNCILLOR
ZONDERVAN, VICE MAYOR MALLON
- 4

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR AZEEM
- 1

DEPUTY CITY CLERK, PAULA CRANE: The meeting is adjourned at 7:02pm on the affirmative vote with four in favor.

The City Clerk's Office received one written communication (ATTACHMENT C).

For the Committee,

Councillor Marc McGovern, Chair
Human Services and Veterans Committee

A communication was received from Councillor Marc McGovern, transmitting the January 2022 report on homelessness in Cambridge.

A communication was received from the Department of Human Services program, transmitting a presentation for the Human Services and Veterans Committee hearing.

A communication was received from Teresa Cardosi, regarding Ad Hoc Homelessness report.