



City of Cambridge

CC 2026-69
FIRST IN COUNCIL
August 3, 2026

The Health and Environment Committee held a public hearing on May 26, 2026 to review and discuss implementation of Zero Waste Master Plan (ZWMP) 2.0, adopted by Council in June 2025, including review of draft ordinance changes as recommended by the ZWMP 2.0.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paula M. Crane".

Paula M. Crane,
Interim City Clerk

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 26, 2026**

**HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Councillor Nolan, Chair
Councillor Al-Zubi
Vice Mayor Azeem
Councillor McGovern
Councillor Zusy

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Health and Environment Committee was held on Tuesday, May 26, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:00 a.m. by the Chair, Councillor Nolan. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

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

Councillor Al-Zubi – Present/Remote
Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent
Councillor McGovern – Present/Remote
Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks (**Attachment A**) and noted that the Call of the meeting was to review and discuss implementation of Zero Waste Master Plan (ZWMP) 2.0, adopted by Council in June 2025, including review of draft ordinance changes as recommended by the ZWMP 2.0. Present at the meeting was Commissioner of Public Works, John Nardone, Deputy Commissioner, Jennifer Mathews, Environmental Services Manager, John Fitzgerald, Recycling Director, Michael Orr, and Deputy City Solicitor, Elliott Veloso.

Councillor Nolan shared she would open public comment for those who wish to speak before the presentation and would also hold public comment again after the presentation.

Paolo, Rebusco, 179 Spring Street, Cambridge, MA, noted the importance of taking into account the trash that is produced with synthetic turfs.

Debbie Gayle, Hammond Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in strong support of the City Council passings the amendments to the ZWMP 2.0

Councillor Nolan recognized the team from DPW who gave a presentation on the Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Councillor Nolan opened public comment.

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, raised concerns that the proposed trash limits may impact families with children and condo owners who pay for private trash collection.

Rob, 40 Inman Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in strong support of the City Council passings the amendments to the ZWMP 2.0

Amy Waltz, Blakeslee Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in strong support of the City Council passings the amendments to the ZWMP 2.0

Helen, Fayette Park, Cambridge, MA, spoke in strong support of the City Council passings the amendments to the ZWMP 2.0

Councillor Nolan reviewed the process on how these amendments can move forward, noting that they do not need to go to Ordinance for more discussion and can be passed to a second reading at a Regular City Council meeting.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor McGovern who thanked the staff for their presentation and asked how the proposed trash limits would affect families with young children using diapers or residents that have medical needs that may produce additional waste. John Nardone explained that households will have enough space for their trash if they are recycling and composting properly. John Nardone added that staff will help to educate and work with residents if a larger trash bin is needed. Councillor McGovern noted the importance of education and outreach and shared his support for the proposed amendments

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Al-Zubi who thanked staff for their work and asked for more information related to the different fluctuations in food waste data. Michael Orr pointed out that the fluctuations in food waste data reflect food waste collection during COVID-19, noting that collection temporarily stopped during that time. Councillor Al-Zubi asked for more information on outreach efforts to the community. Michael Orr shared that outreach is focused on multifamily properties, especially in areas with rodent concerns. Councillor Al-Zubi acknowledged that during move in and move out months for college students, there may be an increase in waste, and asked the team how they approach that. Michael Orr and John Nardone shared that the City has a partnership with Furnishing Hope which helps with the reuse of furniture but noted that there are challenges due to the limited amount of storage space when they are collecting the furniture.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zusy who thanked staff and shared her support for the proposed amendments. Councillor Zusy offered comments related to efforts being made towards the reuse of furniture and provided suggestions on how the City may be able to address some of their challenges, such as using vacant store fronts. Councillor Zusy asked for more information

related to the City's Waste Composition Study and the impact of online shopping on recycling. Michael Orr shared that the Waste Composition Study focused on residential properties that the City serves and noted that packing from online ordering has not had a significant increase in recycling. Councillor Zusy asked how larger residential buildings will be incorporated into the proposed zero waste requirements. John Nardone explained how larger buildings will be required to submit a plan for zero-waste and City collection will continue only where buildings are meeting the operational requirements, and that those that are eligible for recycling and food waste collections will still be free of charge.

Councillor Nolan shared her excitement for the proposed changes and noted that there is a need to update the plastic bag ordinance based on what the City has learned since it was adopted. Councillor Nolan echoed comments made by Councillor Zusy and agreed it would be beneficial to have a permanent location where residents can donate and pick up reusable household items. Councillor Nolan offered comments related to construction and demolition debris from City projects and asked how those materials are managed and recycled. Councillor Nolan pointed out that it is important part of the City's long-term ZWMP goals. John Nardone shared that most construction materials are recycled in accordance with State requirements and that staff are always looking for other opportunities to improve waste diversion.

Councillor Nolan made a motion to forward the proposed recommendations from the Department of Public Works to the Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0 to the full City Council with a favorable recommendation to pass to a second reading.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

*Councillor Nolan and the members of the Committee submitted Policy Order 2026-110 at the June 1, 2026 Regular City Council meeting along with City Manager's Agenda Item 2026-170. **(Attachment B)** CMA 2026-170 was passed to a second reading at the June 22, 2026 Regular City Council meeting.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zusy who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The Health and Environment Committee adjourned at approximately 12:17p.m.

Attachment A – Opening remarks from Councillor Nolan (not verbatim).

Attachment B – POR 2026-110 and CMA 2026-170.

Attachment C – Communications from the public.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[May 26, 2026 Health and Environment Committee - Cambridge, MA](#)

Attachment A

Councillor Nolan Intro

I'm glad we're here today to talk about the implementation of the Zero Waste Master Plan (ZWMP 2.0). As you'll remember, the City Council adopted the Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0 in June 2025. Master planning documents like this are essential oversight in terms of goal setting and achievement, but also in operationalizing across City departments. Through these kinds of documents, we can better coordinate resources, structure programming, and implement important changes over time. The Zero Waste Master Plan (ZWMP) meeting will be focused on the first round of ordinance changes called for by the ZWMP 2.0 Update which I worked to pass last year. These changes include updating the Litter and Refuse Ordinance, requiring Zero Waste Management Plans from large building owners (residential and commercial), mandatory food waste diversion (residential and commercial), updates to the Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance, and a new "Skip The Stuff" Ordinance, among other changes, which we will review again today. These are important ordinance changes which will codify a number of important initiatives within the ZWMP 2.0.

As a reminder of the process that brought us here: the update to the Zero Waste Master Plan was a multi-year public process that included several Health and Environment Committee meetings, dozens of public meetings, events, and community outreach initiatives over several years. This update is the result of numerous rounds of council input along with years of staff research and operational work that informed the recommendations in the final document that this City Council voted to formally adopt last June.

The changes we will discuss today build on the already great work that the City does in solid waste and recycling. We have 4 different curbside programs stop at my - and every - house to pick up trash, recycling, compost and yard waste. And we have made significant strides in reducing residential waste. These new changes help further that work and also expand the work to commercial uses while also implementing important plastic reduction strategies. This multifaceted approach to waste reduction allows us to take a strategic approach to reducing waste, and the attendant GHG emission pollution, reducing the financial impact of our solid waste efforts, and greening our city.

Trash reduction is a large part of that - in the best case, our trash ends up in landfills and adds to carbon and methane emissions. In the worst case, our trash ends up in our streets, our parks, and in our waterways - clogging up drains, causing many problems - not to mention adding other public health ailments to our city. Trash reduction isn't just a green solution, however, it's also an important financial decision to reduce our budget liability for trash removal over time. This Zero Waste Master Plan update is essential to reducing our trash output, increasing our ratios of recycled and composted, and diverted materials, and protecting the public health of our city.

There are additional steps that we will be considering in the near term - including stronger efforts to reduce single use plastic. And to re-convene a meeting on eliminating nips citywide.

With that, I'd like to introduce DPW Commissioner, John Nardone and his team for their presentation.