



August 4, 2025

City Manager Huang and Commissioner Elow,

We are writing to share questions and concerns regarding the recent incident at 243 Broadway involving the Cambridge Police Department on August 2. While we are thankful the situation ended without loss of life, the communications and actions surrounding the response—including the deployment of a chemical agent inside an occupied apartment building with more than 60 units—have raised serious concerns.

We have heard from many constituents asking for a fuller explanation of the actions and decisions made and how they align with departmental training and policies. We have compiled a list of questions that are submitted below:

1. Decision-making process

- How did Cambridge police come to the decision that it was necessary to try to compel this individual to leave with the use of a pepper ball? Is this the current department policy for instances such as this, or are there alternative practices that could be deployed?
- When did CPD leadership arrive on scene for this incident? What is the policy on when top CPD leadership is informed and expected to be onsite for actions such as this?

2. Training and policies

- Cambridge has a [local ordinance](#) restricting the use of chemical weapons and banning them as crowd control agents. How are officers trained and informed about the requirements of Cambridge law?
- What are the Cambridge Police Department's policies about the deployment of pepper balls that were utilized in this situation?
- Which subset of Cambridge police officers are authorized to deploy pepper balls or are all officers authorized to deploy it? How are officers trained on its use?
- What are the Cambridge's police department's policies in cases where an individual has barricaded themselves in a room?



3. Communication with residents and evacuation strategy

- 243 Broadway has 61 apartments and is located in a dense residential neighborhood. Residents [report that they were not informed](#) prior to the deployment of chemical agents in their building that they would be utilized and were still in their homes, including some residents in wheelchairs, leading to pain and vomiting. What was the decision making process around tactics and how were they communicated with residents?
- Some residents report that only the first floor of 243 Broadway was evacuated, while others were told to shelter in place during the deployment of chemical agents. What was the rationale for this partial evacuation strategy, and how was the risk to residents on the upper floors assessed and communicated?

4. Post-incident response

- Has the City conducted a public health assessment or completed outreach to the impacted residents of the building?
 - What resources is the City offering to residents who were impacted?
 - Has the building been assessed by the Fire Department or Inspectional Services Department after deployment of the chemical agent?
- Will the City release additional information regarding the incident to ensure transparency with the community members?
 - Will there be comprehensive reporting on the forces used in this incident?

Sincerely,

Councillor Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler

Councillor Patricia Nolan

Councillor Burhan Azeem

Councillor Sumbul Siddiqui