



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2025 #222
IN CITY COUNCIL
September 8, 2025

I am writing to inform you that I am appointing the following persons below as new members of the Community Benefits Advisory Committee for a term of three (3) years, effective July 1, 2025:

- Sephany Alexis (resident representative)
- Sally Benbasset (resident representative)
- Christina Turner (Cambridge Community Foundation representative)

The Community Benefits Advisory Committee also recommends the reappointment of three (3) current members. They have made valuable contributions and would appreciate the opportunity to continue serving:

- Elizabeth Aguilo (non-profit representative)
- Rowan Murphy (resident representative)
- Michelle Lower (property development representative)

The Community Benefits Advisory Committee was established in 2015, under Ch. 2.127 of CMC. This committee is responsible for identifying community benefits needs of the residents of Cambridge based on priorities established by the City Council, soliciting and evaluating applications from non-profits to provide these services, and making recommendations to the City Manager for the allocation of community benefits funding through grant agreements with non-profit organizations.

The Community benefits Advisory Committee has 13 members who represent the non-profit community, City staff, Cambridge residents, the Cambridge Community Foundation, the business or property development community, and the City's universities or colleges.

The City Manager's office posted a request for applications for the Community Benefits Advisory Committee on the City website and via a news release on March 27, 2025, with a closing date of April 28, 2025. During that time, members of the Committee conducted outreach with their networks. The call for applicants was also posted in several of the City's daily email updates and in postings on the City website. There were sixteen (16) applicants, five (5) of whom were interviewed. The interview panel, made up of City staff members and current committee members, has recommended the appointment of two of those applicants.



The next anticipated vacancy for this committee will come in February 2026. We will begin conversations with the current committee member on their interest in reappointment. If the member does not wish to renew their term, we will advertise and select a replacement candidate through another public outreach and recruitment process.

The current committee is diverse in regards to race, age, lived experience, and profession. A majority of the committee members are women. The three new members will contribute to the existing diversity of this committee.

I am pleased to recommend these six (6) individuals whose expertise and experience will enable them to be valuable members of the Community Benefits Advisory Committee.

New Members:

- 1. Sephany Alexis (resident representative):** Sephany has dedicated over a decade to empowering low-income families by providing essential resources, including assistance with MassHealth and facilitating job searches to secure permanent employment. Currently, Sephany serves as a Homeless Prevention Advocate at HomeStart, an anti-poverty nonprofit that works to end homelessness in Greater Boston. Sephany is a resident of Cambridge with a fundamental understanding of the community and experience working at non-profits and in human service delivery.
- 2. Sally Benbasset (resident representative):** Sally has lived in Cambridge and taught at public schools for over 45 years. Sally was one of the first members of the Early Childhood Task Force and a member of the Youth Council for several years. For the last eight years she has served on the CEOC Board of Directors and recently participated as a Community Reviewer for the Cambridge Community Foundation. Sally is a longtime resident, a committed educator, and a dedicated volunteer in Cambridge's non-profit community.
- 3. Christina Turner (Cambridge Community Foundation representative):** Christina is the Vice President of Programs and Grantmaking at the Cambridge Community Foundation. Working at the Foundation for the past three years, Christina has refined and improved the grantmaking and review processes; enhanced the administration of the Community Fund; and leads the development of the Foundation's strategic initiatives. Prior to working at the Foundation Christina spent two decades working in education, youth and program development, and nonprofit management.

Reappointments:

- 1. Elizabeth (Liz) Aguilo (non-profit representative):** Liz is a founding member of the Community Benefits Advisory Committee. She is the Executive Director of Paine Senior Services. Liz is a geriatric social worker with over 20 years of experience serving Cambridge seniors and their families; providing information and counseling about available services, benefits, and options. Liz has served on the committee since 2017.
- 2. Rowan Murphy (resident representative):** Rowan is a founding member of the Community Benefits Advisory Committee. Rowan is a Cambridge resident who built a career as an executive and an executive-level consultant for foundations and nonprofits. She has diverse experience in non-profit and philanthropic environments and is a dedicated member of the Cambridge community. Rowan has served on the committee since 2017.

3. **Michelle Lower (property development representative):** Michelle is the Vice President of Real Estate Development and Community Relations at Alexandria Real Estate. In her role, Michelle collaborates regularly with the City of Cambridge, MIT, the Kendall Square Association, and local nonprofits. She brings a valuable understanding of development to the Committee. She currently serves on the Board of Directors at Food for Free and has volunteered her time towards a variety of Cambridge non-profits including the East Cambridge Business Association, CitySprouts, and the Cambridge Family Policy Council. Michelle has served on the committee since 2020.

I appreciate the willingness of these community members to serve and look forward to their contributions as members of the Community Benefits Advisory Committee.