



NEIGHBORHOOD & LONG TERM PLANNING, PUBLIC FACILITIES, ARTS & CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, August 14, 2025

2:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Neighborhood and Long Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts and Celebrations Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss policy options presented by city staff to regulate maximum unit sizes to ensure that the City’s zoning ordinances incentivize the creation of housing.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Catherine Zusy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Neighborhood & Long-Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts & Celebration Committee was held on Thursday, August 14, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 2:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was remote participation via Zoom.

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

- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 5. Quorum established.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss policy options presented by city staff to regulate maximum unit sizes to ensure that the City’s zoning ordinances incentivize the creation of housing. Present at the meeting were City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (cdd), Melissa Peters, and Director of Zoning and Development, Jeff Roberts. Also present were Vice Mayor McGovern and Councillor Toner.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Melissa Peters who offered opening remarks and shared that CDD has prepared a range of alternative policy options for the City Council to consider, which were outlined in the presentation. Jeff Roberts gave a presentation titled “Housing Unit Size Limitations”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler opened Public Comment.

Sarah Hill, 595 Franklin Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of limiting unit size and in favor of more affordable housing for the middle class.

James Zall, 203 Pemberton Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of limiting unit size, multifamily zoning, and moving forward with the proposal.

Justin Saif, Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, thanked staff for the information provided in the presentation and spoke in favor of moving forward with the proposal.

Suzanne Blier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about affordability issues with housing and offered comments related to size restrictions.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Nolan who shared concerns about some of the recent zoning changes, noting that some developers are doing the opposite of what was intended with those changes. Councillor Nolan spoke in favor of Option Four in the presentation, sharing that it would encourage more multifamily development. Councillor Nolan added that she would be putting a motion forward related to Option Four. Councillor Nolan asked CDD staff if there was a timeline associated with these proposed changes and if they needed any guidance from the City Council to move forward. Jeff Roberts shared that further study and data would be beneficial moving forward. Melissa Peters added that there would need to be additional decisions that the City Council would need to make, such as height limits. Councillor Nolan asked if there would be any reports ready by September or October related to the housing market, emphasizing the importance of seeing if projects are creating more housing. Melissa Peters shared that CDD would be reporting back to the City Council at either the September 8th or 15th City Council meeting and will provide additional data for review.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Azeem who shared support for Option Four. Councillor Azeem shared that his concern is people purchasing large plots of land to develop large mansions. Councillor Azeem added that he believes Option Four would be a balanced approach to addressing community concerns.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Co-Chair Zusy who agreed that reading the upcoming reports will allow the City Council the opportunity to figure out how to approach the problem. Co-Chair Zusy had a question for the City Solicitor related to remarks made during public comment about a Planning Board meeting related to limit use of the MFH petition to those projects that are currently single family or two family homes that add two or more new units. Megan Bayer provided clarification and shared that it is described in the Balanced Incentive Approach, Option Four. Co-Chair Zusy shared that she looks forward to the report.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who thanked Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler for taking the lead on this initiative and for CDD providing pros and cons associated with each proposal. Vice Mayor McGovern offered comments related to the challenges of different unit sizes and making housing affordable, noting that there needs to be a balance.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Toner who shared that he was not in favor of creating additional changes in zoning, adding that the City should let the new multifamily zoning stay as is and come back in the future to discuss if changes need to be made.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler shared that this discussion has been helpful and offered comments that were in favor of Option Four. Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler noted the importance of monitoring outcomes from zoning changes and revisiting policies if needed. Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler shared concerns that have been expressed by the community. Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler asked for clarity on Option Four and if it would apply to both single family and multifamily housing. Jeff Roberts explained that Option Four is a hybrid of previous approaches, noting that the city cannot directly limit the size of single-family homes, but can propose changes that include height limits, setbacks, and open space. Jeff Roberts offered the suggestion of allowing a mix of unit sizes in order to help balance the different demands that are needed. Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler shared that he looks forward to zoning proposals and data in the future.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Siddiqui who shared that she agrees with a lot that has already been said and highlighted the need for more housing. Councillor Siddiqui emphasized the importance of residents utilizing city programs that already exist, in addition to the zoning.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Nolan who shared that she believes the proposal should include single and two-and-three family housing and that she is in favor of finding solutions that incentivize more units. Councillor Nolan reviewed her proposed motion with the Committee and CDD. The motion was shown on the screen for the public to view.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion that the Neighborhood and Long Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts and Celebrations Committee recommend to the full City Council That the City Manager is requested to work with all relevant departments on zoning amendments to incentivize multifamily zoning while allowing reasonable development of single and two-family homes, the “balanced incentive approach” which is Option Four outlined in the presentation to the NLTP Committee. Further that a proposal be sent to the City council for consideration in a timely manner.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Nolan -Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Megan Bayer who provided a brief overview of what the next steps would be to move forward.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Nolan -Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:11p.m.

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:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1064?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, transmitting a presentation titled "Housing Unit Size Limitations".

A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a response to Policy Order 2025 #25.

That the City Manager is requested to work with relevant staff to present a zoning petition to the City Council for consideration on maximum unit size. CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY COUNCILLOR TONER IN COUNCIL MARCH 3, 2025.



City of Cambridge

O-
FIRST IN COUNCIL
September 8, 2025

COUNCILLOR NOLAN
COUNCILLOR SOBRINHO-WHEELER

- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with all relevant departments on zoning amendments to incentivize multifamily zoning while allowing reasonable development of single and two- family homes, the “balanced incentive approach” which is Option Four outlined in the presentation to the NLTP Committee; and be it further
- ORDERED: That a proposal be sent to the City Council for consideration in a timely manner.