

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026**

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Co-Chair Nolan, Co-Chair
Councillor Al-Zubi, Co-Chair
Vice Mayor Azeem
Councillor Flaherty
Councillor McGovern McGovern
Councillor Simmons
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler
Councillor Zusy
Mayor Siddiqui

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSITY
RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Councillor Flaherty, Co-Chair
Councillor Zusy, Co-Chair
Councillor Al-Zubi
Councillor McGovern
Co-Chair Nolan

A joint public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Finance Committee and Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Thursday, April 30, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 1:30p.m. by the Economic Development and University Relations Co-Chair, Councillor Flaherty. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of Co-Chair Flaherty, Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll of both Committees.

Economic Development and University Relations Committee

Councillor Al-Zubi – Present/Remote
Councillor Flaherty – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Co-Chair Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Present – 5. Quorum established.

Finance Committee

Councillor Al-Zubi – Present/Remote
Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent
Councillor Flaherty – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Co-Chair Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Simmons – Absent
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent*
Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Mayor Siddiqui – Absent*

Present – 5, Absent – 4. Quorum established.

*Mayor Siddiqui was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 1:40p.m.

*Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler was present and remote at 2:30p.m.

Co-Chair Flaherty offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to hold a joint public hearing with Harvard University to discuss and receive and update on the Harvard University Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement. Present at the meeting with City Manager, Yi-An Huang, Assistant City Manager for Finance, Claire Spinner, Director of Assessing, Gayle Willett, and Strategic Initiatives Advisor, Jane Licurse. Present from Harvard University was Director of Government Affairs and Community Relations, Tom Lucey, and Associate Director of Government Affairs and Community Relations, Kendyl Maher-Trumble.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized City Manager Huang for opening remarks relative to the long-standing, collaborative relationship between the City and Harvard. The City Manager noted that financial challenges that both the City and Harvard are facing during economic uncertainty, and shared that the City and Harvard are continuing to negotiate a longer-term agreement to help support community needs with the PILOT agreement.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Kendyl Maher-Trumble who gave a presentation titled “Harvard in the Community”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Tom Lucey who highlighted the relationship between the City and Harvard and acknowledged the current financial uncertainties Harvard, like others, are facing, but added that the University is committed to working with the City on a long-term PILOT agreement. Tom Lucey shared that he looks forward to receiving feedback from the City Council relating to the agreement.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Co-Chair Nolan who thanked Harvard for their continued contributions and community partnership to Cambridge. Co-Chair Nolan pointed out that the additional graduate housing provided by Harvard helps with the current housing crisis. Co-Chair Nolan asked if Harvard has ever tried to estimate the value of all their programs and services it provides to the community. Tom Lucey explained how many of the community programs were created through conversations with City leaders and school officials to help address the community needs. Tom Lucey added that there is no dollar value on these programs and Harvard is committed to maintaining a strong relationship with Cambridge. Co-Chair Nolan shared how important it is for residents to understand all the benefits Harvard provides to the community. Co-Chair Nolan acknowledged the financial challenges both the City and Harvard are facing and shared appreciation for the programs that are provided. Co-Chair Nolan shared that she supports continuing the PILOT agreement but noted the Council may need more time to discuss a long-term agreement.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Councillor McGovern who thanked Harvard for their presentation and pointed out that many residents may not realize how many programs and services the University provides to the community. Councillor McGovern encouraged the University to

promote the available resources so residents can take advantage of them. Councillor McGovern acknowledged the financial challenges that both Harvard and the City are facing and noted it will be important for the two to continue working closely. Councillor McGovern spoke in favor of Harvard providing more housing support, noting that housing affects both Cambridge residents and Harvard students. Councillor McGovern highlighted the positive impact the University has on the community and the economy through employment and support for local businesses, like those in Harvard Square. Councillor McGovern shared that he looks forward to future discussions about a long-term PILOT agreement and more support for housing.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Mayor Siddiqui who thanked Harvard for their partnership and highlighted the University's support during the Pandemic, and through programs such as Rise Up Cambridge. Mayor Siddiqui asked for more information related to Harvard's endowment and operating deficit, as well as hiring freezes, layoffs, and budget reductions. Tom Lucey provided an overview of Harvard's endowment and explained that it consists of many restricted funds that can only be used for specific purposes and not used to cover operating deficits. Tom Lucey shared that hiring freezes, layoffs, and budget cuts are related to the ongoing financial uncertainty that the University is facing. Mayor Siddiqui shared support for looking at ways Harvard could help create more housing opportunities for Cambridge residents and suggested that the Crimson Summer Academy could be an opportunity to strengthen relationships with Cambridge students and families.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Co-Chair Al-Zubi who thanked Harvard for their partnership and programs in Cambridge. Co-Chair Al-Zubi asked for more information related to the negotiation process and how the City is advocating for residents during those discussions, and what a fair contribution from Harvard would look like. City Manager Huang shared that the City and Harvard have been discussing the possibility of a longer-term PILOT agreement over the past year. The City Manager explained that discussions focus on financial contributions and not dollar value to programs and partnerships. The City Manager added that Harvard has always been a strong partner by supporting programs and initiatives and welcomed the City Council to share ideas about what areas they are interested in related to the agreement and collaborations. Co-Chair Zusy shared information related to PILOT agreements with other institutions, such as Yale and Princeton, noting that comparison between other institutions and their host cities could help the City with negotiations. Co-Chair Al-Zubi agreed that comparisons with other universities could assist with negotiations and would like to see the contributions from Harvard increase. Co-Chair Al-Zubi asked if Harvard believes their current contributions reflect its role in Cambridge and the City's long-term goals and priorities. Tom Lucey noted that each university operates differently based on community and circumstances. Tom Lucey shared that Harvard is trying to balance its funding while also helping to support the City and address community needs. Co-Chair Al-Zubi shared that the City and the Council should continue discussing standards as it relates to the agreement and shared she appreciated the ongoing relationship with Harvard.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Co-Chair Zusy who thanked the City and Harvard for their contributions to the community. Co-Chair Zusy highlighted how Harvard and MIT play a role in making Cambridge a successful city through their students, research, and innovation. Co-Chair Zusy suggested that future PILOT agreements be negotiated one year at a time rather than a long-term agreement due to the financial uncertainties both are facing. Gayle Willett responded and shared how Cambridge and Harvard have a strong working relationship. Gayle Willett provided an overview of property taxes and tax-exempt properties that are used for educational purposes. In addition, Gayle Willett emphasized the importance of maintaining a collaborative relationship with the Universities.

Co-Chair Flaherty shared his personal experiences growing up in Cambridge and recognized the value Harvard brings to the community. Co-Chair Flaherty shared that he reviewed the report and it gave him even more appreciation for the University's contributions, such as employment, tax payments, construction investments, educational programs, and community services. Co-Chair Flaherty pointed out that many residents are not aware of the opportunities Harvard provides and agreed with Councillor McGovern's comments about creating more public awareness of the programs that are available. Co-Chair Flaherty shared that he looks forward to the City and Harvard having continued conversations and working together to address shared challenges and community goals.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized City Manager Huang who shared that the negotiations between the City and Harvard are ongoing and pointed out that there is not a requirement that the agreement be finalized by June. The City Manager added that both parties are continuing to work together towards a resolution, and if one takes longer than expected, the City is ok with continuing discussions because of the strong relationship between the two. He expects that Harvard will continue to participate in the voluntary program.

City Manager Huang shared that City staff prepared a comparison of PILOT agreements that included other major universities and their host cities (**Attachment A**). The City Manager briefly reviewed the chart, noting that PILOT agreements vary from city to city, which makes comparison difficult. City Manager Huang added that Harvard is in both Cambridge and Boston and contributions to both cities were included in the analysis. Tom Lucey agreed that comparing the PILOT agreements can be challenging because universities count contributions differently. He noted that some institutions will include scholarships or other non-cash benefits, while Harvard does not.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who highlighted how the City also provides services that benefit Harvard, such as public safety, parks, schools, and other municipal services. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler explained that the PILOT agreement is an important way for Harvard to help support those services as well and spoke in favor of the University contributing more to programs. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler agreed with previous Councillors regarding the PILOT supporting affordable housing, as well as childcare and afterschool programs.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Co-Chair Al-Zubi who suggested the City review PILOT agreements between universities such as Yale and Princeton and their host communities when reviewing Harvard's contributions, adding that although every agreement is different, it would be important to find comparable support. Co-Chair Al-Zubi added that additional funding could help address services such as affordable housing and food access.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Co-Chair Nolan who suggested that future collaboration between the City and Harvard could include areas such as sustainability and climate resilience, adding that the work Harvard is already doing towards thermal energy could benefit Cambridge residents.

Co-Chair Flaherty offered closing remarks and that everyone for the discussion.

Co-Chair Flaherty recognized Councillor McGovern who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll of both Committees.

Economic Development and University Relations Committee

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes
Councillor Flaherty – Yes
Councillor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Nolan – Yes
Councillor Zusy – Yes
Yes – 5. Motion passed.

Finance Committee

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes
Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent
Councillor Flaherty – Yes
Councillor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Nolan – Yes
Councillor Simmons – Absent
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent
Councillor Zusy – Yes
Mayor Siddiqui – Yes
Yes – 6, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

The joint meeting adjourned at approximately 2:49p.m

Attachment A – PILOT University Comparison.

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:
[Apr 30, 2026 Economic Development and University Relations Committee - Cambridge, MA](#)