



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Public Safety Committee will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, September 10, 2025 to discuss COF 2025 #106, including questions that were submitted by City Council members regarding an incident at 243 Broadway on August 2, 2025 and the public safety response.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Catherine Zusy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

Councillor Wilson offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss COF 2025 #106, including questions that were submitted by City Council members regarding an incident at 243 Broadway on August 2, 2025 and the public safety response. Present at the meeting from the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) were Police Commissioner, Christine Elow, Superintendent, Frederick Cabral, Deputy Superintendent, John Boyle, Deputy Superintendent, Buckowe Yam, Director of Clinical Support Services, Dr. James Barrett, and Public Information Officer, Sergeant Robert Reardon. Also present were City Manager, Yi-An Huang, City Solicitor Megan Bayer, and Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Rebecca Fuentes. Present from the CARE Team was Interim Director, Marie Mathieu and Community Partnerships and Engagement Manager, Kara Blue. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, Councillor Azeem, and Mayor Simmons were present via Zoom and Councillor Nolan was present in the Sullivan Chamber. Councillor Wilson noted that District Attorney, Marian Ryan, was also present via Zoom.

Councillor Wilson recognized Commissioner Elow who offered opening remarks and provided a brief overview of the incident at 243 Broadway.

Councillor Wilson recognized Sergeant Reardon who gave a presentation titled “Cambridge Police Department 243 Broadway Incident Review”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. In addition to the presentation, CPD also provided in advance a document in response to COF 2025 #106 and CPD Policy Number 46-2, Active Threats.

Councillor Wilson recognized District Attorney Ryan who shared that CPD did a good job providing an overview of what happened on August 2, 2025, noting that it was a very difficult situation.

Councillor Wilson recognized Marie Mathieu who shared that there is always room for continued conversation and agreed CPD was in a very complicated situation with all parties involved. Marie Mathieu highlighted that with continued conversations and collaborations with CPD, there could be an opportunity in the future for the CARE team to be deployed to a situation similar to this to utilize the tools and tactics they are trained to do.

Councillor Wilson recognized City Manager Huang who thanked the Chair for holding the meeting and reflected on the many challenges in policing. City Manager Huang noted that this was the first major event where body cameras were used since their implementation and would be able to provide additional information when they are reviewed. City Manager Huang thanked CPD for their transparency and highlighted how they are open to learn from this incident.

Councillor Wilson opened Public Comment.

Andrew Marx, 66 Reed Street, Cambridge MA, offered comments related to people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Corinne, Central Square, spoke against the actions taken by CPD on August 2, 2025.

Katherine Silvestre, 253 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke against the actions taken by CPD on August 2, 2025.

Linden Jenkins, 150 Erie Street, Cambridge, MA, urged the City to provide more resources and training for the CARE Team.

Lee Farris, 269 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on the importance of engaging with residents and neighbors while a situation such as this unfolds.

Robert Winters, Cambridge, MA, spoke in strong support of the actions taken by CPD on August 2, 2025.

Bill Cunningham spoke on a previous Resolution which brought together multiple local agencies to be familiar with various developments throughout the city.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Zusy who asked why CPD did not allow the individual to calm down, possibly overnight, before deploying OC Spray, noting this would have also allowed more time for residents to exit the building safely. Commissioner Elow shared that the Department learned that the individual was involved in a serious incident days earlier, which is why immediate action was necessary. Deputy Superintendent Yam added that the individual had already harmed community members and was a risk to neighbors if the situation escalated further. Deputy Superintendent highlighted that CPD maintained dialogue and continued to monitor the individual from outside the building. Councillor Zusy shared that OC Spray should remain a useful nonlethal option for the Department and added that it is important to review what other alternative tools could be used. Councillor Wilson pointed out that the individual had a weapon, had already injured someone, and was running through the community, and agreed waiting would be a serious risk. Deputy Superintendent Yam added that there were concerns about the individual staying inside the apartment, and explained that communication with him never stopped, sharing that the goal was a safe surrender.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked if there was ever a mental health professional on site during the incident. Commissioner Elow shared there was not. Councillor Siddiqui asked if not using a clinician in this situation was being reviewed. Commissioner Elow explained that there have been internal conversations and pointed out that custody of the individual was the goal, which is why crisis negotiators were being utilized instead of clinicians. Superintendent Cabral added that if clinicians were brought in, based on this situation, it would have needed to be someone who already had a relationship with the individual. Chair Wilson asked what kind of situation would be appropriate to bring in a clinician if this one was not. Superintendent Cabral provided examples of when it could be appropriate. Dr. Barrett also responded and explained why this situation was not a situation for a mental health evaluation. Councillor Siddiqui urged the Department to re-evaluate the use of clinicians, noting that all possible tools should be considered.

Councillor Wilson recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who shared that if a mental health professional were on scene they could have helped CPD with negotiations and urged the City to work towards the CARE Team providing more coverage. The Vice Mayor noted that social workers cannot always deescalate a situation and emphasized the importance of scene safety for social workers who do arrive to incidents. The Vice Mayor

questioned why the entire building was not evacuated and why residents were not given more support once they were evacuated. Commissioner Elow agreed that in future similar situations a full evacuation should be done. The Vice Mayor asked what support was provided to the evacuated residents, such as food and shelter. Chair Wilson added it would be important to know what City staff were also on scene assisting the community. City Manager Huang shared that Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison, was available to help residents and pointed out that there were many factors involved in real time, which made it difficult to understand which support was going to be needed. Superintendent Cabral shared that pizza was provided, and hotel rooms were arranged for those who wanted them, and residents were allowed to go back into the building for essentials. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that animals should be considered when doing evacuations. The Vice Mayor urged CPD to provide outreach and follow ups with residents to further explain the situation and why certain decisions were made.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who asked for clarification on what type of chemical agent was deployed into the building, and how many were deployed. Commissioner Elow confirmed that OC Pepper Spray inside a container was deployed ten times through a window. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked the Commissioner what CPD would do differently if a situation such as this occurred again. Commissioner Elow explained how a tactical drone would have been extremely beneficial for this situation and provided more situational awareness of the scene to Officers. Additionally, Commissioner Elow and Deputy Superintendent Cabral provided examples of less than lethal options that could have benefited the Department. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked if the CARE Team's involvement was ever a consideration. Commissioner Elow shared that they did not believe it was an appropriate time to call the CARE Team because the situation involved an armed, violent person, who had already injured people. Councillor Wilson asked if it would have been appropriate to call in mental health professionals when the individual was barricaded in his home, alone. Commissioner Elow noted that it could be reviewed for the future, but it is also important to ensure the safety of all including clinicians. City Manager Huang added that the CARE Team is still a very new Department, pointing out that barricaded individuals is a situation that requires careful planning and training. City Manager Huang noted that the Crisis Negotiation Team has received specialized training in these situations. The City Manager agreed that there should be additional discussions on how clinicians can be incorporated in the future. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler thanked CPD for acknowledging what did and did not work in this situation and asked if they could provide more information on tactics used by the Crisis Negotiation Team. Deputy Superintendent Cabral, Superintendent Yam, and Commissioner Elow provided an overview of negotiations and how the individual was apprehended without any issues, noting that during the apprehension, Police Officers did not have their guns pointed at the individual and there was productive dialogue between the Officers and the individual. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked when body camera footage would be released. Commissioner Elow shared it would be released after the court proceedings.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Nolan who thanked CPD staff for their responses to questions and concerns. Councillor Nolan agreed with other Councillors about having more discussions related to reviewing how clinicians could be engaged sooner in future incidents. Councillor Nolan emphasized the importance of providing the right support and tools to community members and residents that were affected during the incident.

Councillor Wilson asked for more information on the robot that was used and how it entered the home of the individual. Superintendent Yam explained the robot entered through the individual's home, which he then put a towel over it, making it so CPD could no longer use it as a tool. Councillor Wilson asked if the CARE Team could provide information on what type of calls they have been responding to. Marie Mathieu shared that the CARE Team has been responding to well-being checks, unwanted calls, and low-level psych calls. Marie Mathieu noted that the Team is not responding to calls that involve weapons or if there are safety concerns to at this time. Councillor Wilson asked CPD in what situations the Co-Response Team would be used for. Dr. Barrett explained that the Co-Response Team responds to police calls related to mental health situations and will not respond to CARE Team calls if CARE is available. Councillor Wilson pointed out that what she believes she is hearing for Councillors and community members is that mental health providers need to be a bigger resource that is utilized in crisis situations.

Councillor Wilson and Committee members discussed the possibility of proposing a motion related to requesting the City Manager and the Police Department review crisis negotiations protocols and utilizing mental

health professionals. The Committee decided to submit a Policy Order related to this on the next City Council Agenda.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

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

The Public Safety Committee adjourned at approximately 4:59p.m.

Attachment A – 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:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1070?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Councillor Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler, transmitting a memorandum regarding share questions and concerns regarding the recent incident at 243 Broadway involving the Cambridge Police Department on August 2, 2025.

A communication was received from Kia Benjamin, Office Manager, Cambridge Police Department, transmitting a presentation titled "Cambridge Police Department 243 Broadway Incident Review".

A communication was received from Kia Benjamin, Office Manager, Cambridge Police Department, transmitting a response to COF 2025 #106.

A communication was received from Kia Benjamin, Office Manager, Cambridge Police Department, transmitting information on Cambridge Police Department Policy Number 46-2, Active Threats.

From: Lee Farris <Lee@LeeFarris.net>
Sent: Monday, September 15, 2025 6:10 PM
To: City Council; Huang, Yi-An
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: PO 2, crisis protocol; PO 3, assisting immigrants dealing with ICE

Dear Mayor, Councilors, and Manager,

Regarding **PO #2, in addition to supporting adding access at all hours to a social worker for crisis situations**, such as someone from CARE, I ask that the city develop a protocol for interacting with residents in a building where someone has barricaded themselves. As I observed the handling of the crisis situation at Windsor and Broadway in early August, I felt there was not nearly enough attention to the residents in the building. I want us to be better prepared when similar events occur in the future.

I would like this crisis protocol to cover:

- criteria on when to evacuate residents or shelter in place
- what aid should be given to residents- hotel, food, water?
- who is in charge of making these decisions?
- who carries them out?
- who decides how to modify decisions as a situation changes?
- who can provide social services for the residents during and after the crisis?
- who assists residents with accessing their apartments during a prolonged situation, such as feeding pets, getting medications, etc.

Regarding **PO #3 on assisting immigrants** dealing with ICE, I encourage the city to talk with people in the immigrant-led LUCE network and BIJAN network to become familiar with what they already offer. LUCE and BIJAN are ready to help people dealing with ICE right now, whereas the city hotline would take some time to start. I suggest that the city work with the school staff to make sure that CPS students and staff have a wallet card with the LUCE and BIJAN contact info. I encourage the city to provide services that LUCE and BIJAN do not currently provide, such as interpretation.

Thanks,

Lee (she/her)
Lee@LeeFarris.net
617-354-6740 (landline, 9am-10pm)

Erwin, Nicole

From: Dan Totten <dantotten@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 2:02 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: public safety - don't let them deceive

Hi,

Thank you for scheduling this meeting, accountability is important and I very much appreciate that the conversation is happening.

The list of questions that councillors asked ahead of time seems to make the fundamental assumption that a “pepper ball” was used (and only a pepper ball). However, there is considerable reason to believe that this might not have been the case:

- TBR is reporting that tear gas was used; that internal CPD radio communications indicated “gas” was introduced just after midnight, and that later calls from first responders mention deploying OC **and** tear gas.
- In one Cambridge Day article, an EMT described it as “a mix of pepper spray and tear gas”. **CPD has not issued a correction** to the article at the time of my sending this.
- In a second Cambridge Day article, Bob Reardon described it as “chemical agents”
- The official CPD presentation claims there was a single deployment of OC at 12:08 a.m. This seems to directly contradict scanner audio showing multiple deployments (12:07 a.m., 12:29 a.m., and more).

Given all of this, it is unclear why the initial set of questions began with that narrow assumption. Perhaps the councillors had clarified that point with CPD behind the scenes, but it would be far more meaningful for the public to hear it from them on the record. What exactly did they use, and why does every independent account differ from CPD’s official version?

When I hear the emphasis on “pepper ball,” it reminds me of when former CPD Commissioner Branville Bard relied on a technicality to claim that CPD did not have any military weapons of any kind. Residents of that era saw a tank roaming the city and a weapon list that looked like it belonged in *Call Of Duty*, so it was easy to see through his deceit. Similarly, here, the point is that whatever they used behaved like a gas by traveling through the ventilation system. It caused significant harm to residents on all floors, including a baby, seniors, disabled people, and pets.

CPD may be technically correct that they deployed a “pepper ball.” But that language obscures what actually happened: once fired, the chemical spread through the ventilation system, stairwells, and elevator shaft. Residents did not experience a “ball”, which implies a solid object, they experienced gas exposure throughout the building. If the law allows CPD to fire gas into a residential building as long as they call it a ball, then the law is broken and councillors need to fix it.

If I lived in that building, I would be Extremely Pissed that CPD is attempting to explain themselves by saying they wanted to “minimize inconvenience.” Residents were vomiting, coughing, and fleeing in the night. A baby had no diapers or wipes, an elderly man in a wheelchair had to be pushed through

contaminated hallways, and people had to confront CPD and CFD just to be warned chemicals had been deployed. This was widespread harm to dozens of people who became collateral damage in a militarized police experiment.

CPD also keeps hiding behind "crisis negotiators," but we know from their own admissions that no mental health clinician ever spoke to the man in crisis. That is not a care-based response. That is a standoff managed entirely on police terms, backed by rifles and gas.

Beyond that, I stand with the demands made by TBR, which I've pasted below:

- ***Cambridge Police must step aside from mental health crisis response, they are not the right responders.***
- ***Apologies and reparations:***
 - ***To the individual arrested: charges dropped, apology issued, and damages paid.***
 - ***To the tenants of 243 Broadway: apology and compensation for harm.***
 - ***To the family and community of Arif Sayed Faisal: apology, damages, and dedication of a public square in his memory.***
- ***Mandatory CARE Team involvement in all mental health crisis calls.***
- ***New citywide protocols prioritizing non-police, care-based responses.***
- ***Nobody else should die or be traumatized during a mental health crisis.***

Thank you,

Dan Totten
54 Bishop Allen Drive #2

Erwin, Nicole

From: Madeline Lee <lee.madeline.g@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 9:10 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Public Safety Committee hearing 9/10 - 243 Broadway

Dear Councilors,

I write to add my voice to the number of constituent concerns about the incident that occurred at 243 Broadway on August 2, 2025.

As a Cambridge community member, I have been shocked and disappointed by the use of a chemical weapon by the Cambridge Police and the choice to deploy it in an occupied residential building where people of all ages and unknown conditions of health were sleeping or at home.

I am concerned about the lack of transparency from the police force and the negative mental and physical health impacts potentially caused by the events on community members.

I am unable to attend the Public Safety Hearing today, Wednesday, September 10th, but truly hope that there are clear and actionable responses to the letter from Councilors Wheeler, Nolan, Azeem & Siddiqui, as well as to questions and requests for accountability from the community raised during today's hearing.

Thank you,
Madeline Lee
238 Garden St.

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Madeline Lee

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pronouns: she/her/hers

Erwin, Nicole

From: Steve Wineman <steven.wineman@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 9, 2025 1:06 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Manager; City Clerk
Subject: Princiano Faustin incident

Dear Councillors,

I am writing to convey my grief and outrage at the police response on August 1--August 2 to a Cambridge resident, Princiano Faustin, who was experiencing a mental health crisis. This incident will be a topic of discussion at the upcoming Public Safety Committee hearing on September 10.

Short of the use of lethal force, it's hard to imagine a more destructive police response to a crisis: first and foremost for the individual in crisis, who was assaulted with "less lethal munitions" and tear gas and, significantly, *was never offered mental health support throughout the incident*; and also for all the residents of 243 Broadway, who were placed at risk by the use of tear gas in the middle of the night in their building. I refer you to the [Timeline of Events](#) compiled by The Black Response.

The City of Cambridge is already on record, through the creation of the CARE Team, as recognizing that police are not appropriate responders to mental health crises, and that we need an alternative response system staffed with responders who are trained to respond compassionately and supportively to members of the community who are in crisis. I urge you to make CARE Team involvement mandatory in all mental health crisis calls. To implement this, new citywide protocols are needed to prioritize non-police, care-based response and assure that police are not first responders to mental health crises. Apologies and reparations from the City are also in order for Princiano Faustin and for all residents of 243 Broadway.

The August 1-2 incident echoes the police use of lethal force on Arif Sayed Faisal. I call on you to offer a long overdue apology to his family as well as reparations and the dedication of a public square in his memory.

Thank you for your consideration.

Steve Wineman
26 McTernan St.

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This email communication is made possible by the labor of the people of the Congo, including thousands of children, mining cobalt for rechargeable lithium batteries in conditions tantamount to slavery. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2023/02/01/1152893248/red-cobalt-congo-drc-mining-siddharth-kara>

Erwin, Nicole

From: Gerald Bergman <geraldbergman@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 4, 2025 4:53 PM
To: Wilson, Ayesha; Marc McGovern
Cc: City Council; City Clerk; City Manager
Subject: Fwd: Free speech demonstrations on the weekends of August 3 and 10

>
> Councillor Wilson and McGovern:

Does the Cambridge Public Safety Committee have any intention of discussing the actions of the Cambridge Police Department at free speech demonstrations on August 3 and 10?
If so, has a date for this discussion been set? If not, why not?

The use of "pepper balls" in residential buildings, especially without notification to residents, certainly should be discussed. I am glad this is on the agenda of the Public Safety Committee for September 10.

The use of barricades and pepper spray by the police, actions that result in injuries and arrests at a free speech demonstration, deserve to be discussed. Police response or non-response to axe wielding counter demonstrators is also of extreme importance. I am anxious to read a full report by the police regarding their actions on August 3 and 10. Will the Public Safety Committee have an opportunity to review videos of these events?

Thank you,
Gerald Bergman
82 Elm Street

>
> I am requesting that City Councillors review police actions on the weekends of August 3 and 10 in Harvard Square in regard to demonstrations concerning Palestine.

>
> I was not present at the demonstrations. However, after hearing from several Cambridge residents who were present at the demonstrations (these members of the Cambridge community are highly respected and are long term residents), I am concerned that free speech protected demonstrations were not adequately and fairly protected.

>
> I am concerned that the police use of barricades and pepper spray, as well as the extremely large police presence on August 3 was an over reaction to the demonstration and served to be a cause rather than a deterrent to what occurred. The use of barricades and pepper spray used on that day may not have been used in a way that adequately and fairly protected free speech activities. Any existing photos and video of what occurred, as well as testimony of participants and the police should be examined.

>
> Is there a role here for the Cambridge Police Review and Advisory Board?

>
> How are free speech demonstrations treated? Are people being protected? Is a protection of property and business activities taking precedence over the protection of people and free speech. Is there notable bias in the manner in which the police respond to demonstrators versus anti-demonstrators based on their political beliefs (beliefs of the police as well as demonstrators and anti-demonstrators)? What tools are the police using and are these tools (barricades and pepper spray among them) being used correctly?

>

> There was video posted on the internet of a driver welding an axe and threatening demonstrators as he ran his car through a group of marchers the following weekend. (I believe on August 10) What protections were provided for demonstrators on that day and what is the status of the investigation into that incident?

>

> I believe that these investigations and a thorough review of police and community interactions should be conducted as quickly and openly as possible.

>

> Please contact me regarding what role as a City Councilor you will be taking in regard to these public concerns regarding police conduct and procedures as well as free speech protected demonstrations.

>

> Thank you.

>

> Gerald Bergman

> 82 Elm Street

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