



HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

2:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Health and Environment Committee will hold a public hearing to review and discuss solar impact analysis and zoning options to encourage the use of solar energy systems and protect solar access for Registered Solar Energy Systems.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote

Councillor Wilson – Present/Remote

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to hold a public hearing to review and discuss solar impact analysis and zoning options to encourage the use of solar energy systems and protect solar access for Registered Solar Energy Systems. Present at the meeting was Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD), Melissa Peters, Director of Zoning and Development (CDD), Jeff Roberts, Deputy Climate Chief Officer from the Office of Sustainability, Susanne Rasmussen, and present via Zoom was the Chief Climate Officer, Julie Wormser. City Solicitor Megan Bayer, Vice Mayor McGovern, and Councillor Zusy were also present. CDD Consultant, Mehdi Heris, was present via Zoom and Liz Bryon from CARE Housing was present in the Sullivan Chamber.

Councillor Nolan recognized Jeff Roberts who gave a presentation titled “Zoning Protections for Rooftop Solar”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Councillor Nolan recognized Liz Byron who gave a presentation titled “Zoning to Protect Buildings with Solar”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Councillor Nolan opened Public Comment.

Young Kim, 17 Norris Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns related to the information provided by CDD.

Gordon Moore, 9 Rutland Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments related to information provided by CDD and CARE Housing and next steps related to zoning.

Marina Atlas, 37 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments that emphasized the importance of sunshine for health.

Thomas Goreau, 37 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, urged the City to provide solar access to everyone to help with global warming.

Nancy Seidman, 9 Cleveland Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the use of rooftop solar and offered comments on the CARE Housing presentation.

David Halperin, 14 Valentine Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns related to the proposed zoning.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on the importance of sunshine and tree canopy and provided suggestions on solar panel usage.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who had clarifying comments related to zoning impacts and changes for zoning factoring into decisions related to inclusionary housing and asked housing with inclusionary units would be exempt, if inclusionary housing would be exempt to allow the opportunity for more affordable housing. Jeff Roberts shared some of the challenges that could occur with developers when deciding to build four or six story buildings that include inclusionary units. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler emphasized the need for more affordable housing.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who asked if the City knew how many solar panels are currently in Cambridge. Deputy Director Rasmussen responded by sharing there are around 800 installations. Councillor Wilson asked if the City has considered investing in a solar garden and how that would impact any current or future solar projects. Deputy Director Rasmussen provided information on community solar projects and shared that the City provides access to community solar through the Cambridge Community Electricity program, which she provided an overview of. Councillor Wilson asked Liz Byron what CARE Housing would like the Committee to take away from this discussion, related to future planning and the environment. Liz Byron shared that she would like to see the City move forward with solar zoning across the City, continue to create programs that support more solar installation, and review past Ordinances to incorporate more solar. Julie Wormser provided clarification related to the overall carbon budget and the efforts towards protecting individual solar budgets. Julie Wormser added that there are much cheaper ways the City can work towards carbon goals. Councillor Nolan shared that there is a Policy Order incentivizing solar across the City to reach carbon goals.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked Melissa Peters if she had any recommendations towards creating more inclusionary units while also reaching rooftop solar goals. Melissa Peteres shared that it is important to look at all the goals around the City's different planning topics and identify priorities and conflicts to find the right balance and address concerns.

Councillor Nolan recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who offered comments related to compensation programs and zoning and shared it would be beneficial to have a list of all the different environmental requirements and programs in the City for the public to have access to. The Vice Mayor added it would be important to see if there would be a way to gain back the 6% of housing that would be lost with this proposed zoning. The Vice Mayor asked if there would be a way to exempt AHO projects, which are 100% affordable, and pointed out the importance of reaching out to developers to make sure this proposed zoning is achievable for them to build.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zusy who had questions related to the location of setbacks. Jeff Roberts reviewed and clarified the information provided on recommendation of setbacks. Councillor Zusy asked if current development projects would be affected if this zoning were to pass soon and how long it would take to pass this Zoning. Megan Bayer explained building protection as it relates to zoning and changes, and Jeff Roberts provided additional information related to permitted projects and projects in the planning phase. Megan Bayer and Jeff Roberts provided an overview of the next steps to move this proposed zoning forward. Councillor Zusy encouraged the City Council to pass this proposed zoning as soon as possible.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion that the Health and Environment Committee recommend to the full City Council that the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the Community Development Department to draft zoning language based on the proposed recommendations, review the feasibility of the proposed recommendations with developers, and consider the possibility of having AHO construction be exempt from the proposed zoning.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Wilson – Yes

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

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the Community Development Department to draft zoning language based on the proposed recommendations, review the feasibility of the proposed recommendations with developers, and consider the possibility of having AHO construction be exempt from the proposed zoning.

Councillor Nolan offered closing remarks.

**Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Absent
Councillor Nolan – Yes
Councillor Siddiqui – Yes
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Wilson – Yes

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

The Health and Environment Committee adjourned at approximately 3:50p.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:

[Sep 16, 2025 2:00 PM - Health & Environment Committee - Committee Meeting](#)

A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a presentation titled "Zoning Protections for Rooftop Solar".

A communication was received from Councillor Nolan, transmitting a presentation from CARE Housing titled "Zoning to Protect Buildings with Solar".



City of Cambridge

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FIRST IN COUNCIL
September 29, 2025

COUNCILLOR NOLAN
COUNCILLOR WILSON

WHEREAS: The Health and Environment Committee held a public hearing on September 16, 2025 to discuss solar impact and zoning; and

WHEREAS: The Committee voted favorably; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the Community Development Department to draft zoning language based on the proposed recommendations, review the feasibility of the proposed recommendations with developers, and consider the possibility of having AHO construction be exempt from the proposed zoning.