



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

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, September 25, 2025

10:00 AM

Sullivan Chamber

The Neighborhood and Long Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts and Celebrations Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss whether we should reinstate something similar to the exemption of the Dover Amendment to regulate the density and impact of institutional development within residential districts. Our 1979 & 1980 exemption was eliminated February 10, 2025 with the passage of the Multifamily Housing Ordinance.

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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<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, September 25, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 10:00 a.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Zusy. 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 – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Absent

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote

Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

**Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.**

Co-Chair Zusy offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss whether the City should reinstate something similar to the exemption of the Dover Amendment to regulate the density and impact of institutional development within residential districts. The 1979 & 1980 exemption was eliminated February 10, 2025 with the passage of the Multifamily Housing Ordinance. Present at the meeting was Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD), Melissa Peters, Director of Zoning and Development, Jeff Roberts, and City Solicitor, Megan Bayer. Also present was Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Wilson, and Councillor Toner. Panelists included Sarah Gallop, MIT, Melissa Stopa, MIT, Tom Lucey, Harvard University, Alexandra Offiong, Harvard University, Joanne Kossuth, Lesley University, and Sarah Rhatigan, outside Counsel for Lesley University.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Jeff Roberts who gave a presentation titled “Institutional Use Zoning”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

**Co-Chair Zusy opened Public Comment.**

Alan Joslin, 36 Banks Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments and suggestions related to institutional zoning.

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of an exemption from the Dover Amendment.

Suzanne Blier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, offered comments and suggestions related to institutional zoning.

Marilee Meyer, 10 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of protecting residential areas within the city.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments and concerns related to the Dover Amendment.

Lawrence Atkins, Cambridge, MA, spoke on the importance of having the community more involved with proposed changes in the city.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Sarah Gallop and Tom Lucey who provided comments related to institutional zoning and housing and pointed out that neither MIT nor Harvard have exercised their Dover Amendment rights.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Joanne Kossuth who explained how Lesley has been reinvesting into their campus and provided information on the 2019 purchase of the Episcopal School property.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Councillor Nolan who emphasized the importance of aligning with State law while also ensuring community voices are being heard. Councillor Nolan pointed out the contributions that Harvard and MIT provide to the city, such as employment and property taxes. Councillor Nolan noted the importance of aligning the proposed zoning with city-wide goals. Melissa Peters offered a brief overview of how Cambridge and the different Institutions continue to collaborate as it relates to development on the different campuses. Melissa Peters encouraged the Council and the City to work on zoning solutions that are productive to achieve goals while also being aware of the implications of the Dover Amendment.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler who shared that he would be in favor of a Home Rule Petition related to the Dover Amendment but only if it were not tied to the City needing to maintain exclusionary zoning practices.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who thanked staff for their work and noted the importance of having ongoing discussions with the community. The Vice Mayor shared concerns related to the Riverside Community, which neighbors both Harvard and MIT. Vice Mayor McGovern emphasized how important it is to continue with housing development and to address the housing crisis. Vice Mayor McGovern shared that he would like this conversation to continue within the City Council.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Councillor Wilson who offered comments on the importance of housing, infrastructure, and being able to provide enough housing for students, but added that it is also important to recognize unintended consequences for neighborhoods and the community. Councillor Wilson pointed out that it is important that all of this work aligns with city goals. Jeff Roberts shared that this discussion was important for staff to receive input and feedback from the Committee and the Universities, while also highlighting how zoning changes will involve trade-offs. Jeff Roberts offered suggestions on how the city could move forward with more development by having a thoughtful planning and review process. Councillor Wilson added that ongoing updates to the Council are important in order to adjust policies and that the city should try and find a way to balance housing needs with institutional needs.

Jeff Roberts explained that the discussion was primarily informational, aimed at gathering input from the City Council, universities, and the community, and noted that potential zoning changes involve trade-offs, particularly regarding student housing and institutional uses. He recommended a middle-path approach focused on stakeholder engagement, careful review, and thoughtful planning to avoid negative outcomes while encouraging development that meets city objectives. In a follow-up, Wilson reiterated the importance of ongoing conversations and annual reviews, emphasizing that regular check-ins help the city adjust policies, remain responsive to community input, and balance housing development with institutional needs.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Councillor Toner who shared that he had similar comments and concerns that Councillor Wilson addressed.

Co-Chair Zusy asked a clarifying question related to the institutional use zoning information that was provided on Agenda Packet page 16. Jeff Roberts responded and provided a brief overview on prohibited use. Jeff Roberts pointed out that zoning is a tool that implements city planning goals, while also reviewing the different impacts it may have, adding that it is important to continuously review the zoning and make the needed adjustments to reach planning goals. Co-Chair Zusy emphasized how the Universities are great partners to the City, but noted the need for clear institutional land use controls that provide incentives for both to plan for the future, to ensure rational development. She also noted that the City needs to encourage Harvard and MIT to build more housing to house their graduate students and post docs and to encourage their success as institutions. This means continuing to work collaboratively. She noted that the City continued to need to have guidelines for institutional development and that “good fences make good neighbors.”

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Councillor Nolan who asked if the amendments would be an easy fix as a first step and then move forward with a Home Rule Petition. Co-Chair Zusy asked for clarification on whether the amendments are necessary. Megan Bayer explained that it does put the city in an uncomfortable position when zoning is in violation of state law. Jeff Roberts added that these proposed amendments would be straightforward and would bring the zoning in compliance with state law. Megan Bayer provided an overview of the process of putting forward a Home Rule Petition.

Co-Chair Zusy recognized Councillor Wilson who shared concerns about moving forward without fully understanding potential consequences, stressing how important it is to not negatively impact neighborhoods, even if the intention is to increase housing. Councillor Wilson asked if staff could provide information on what negative outcomes could arise with these changes. Melissa Peters shared that staff carefully look at both the intended and unintended consequences when reviewing zoning policies, noting that every policy involves trade-offs.

Melissa Peters echoed comments related to aligning zoning to be compliant with state law, while also continuing the discussion of the City and the Council's long-term goals.

Committee members discussed putting a motion forward to request the law department to align City and State law regarding institutional uses and then to meet with the institutions to discuss further how best to regulate the density and impact of institutional development within residential districts, but decided that a Policy Order on a City Council Agenda would be a better option.

**Co-Chair Zusy recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Absent

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

**Yes – 3, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.**

**The Committee adjourned at approximately 11:57a.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. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[Sep 25, 2025 10:00 AM - Neighborhood & Long Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts & Celebration Committee - Committee Meeting](#)

**A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a presentation titled "Institutional Use Zoning".**