Opening remarks from the Mayor

CHARTER RIGHT

Order #7 (Oct 19). City Council Divestment from companies complicit in the Genocide, Apartheid, and Occupation of Palestinians. Councillor Al-Zubi, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler (PO26#195)

Order #8 (Oct 19). That the City Manager is requested to direct the City Solicitor to provide the Ordinance Committee, before its hearing, with an opinion on the proposed ordinance under M.G.L. c. 30B and applicable federal law to boycott companies complicit in Israel's Apartheid, Genocide, and Illegal Occupation of Palestine. Councillor Al-Zubi, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler (PO26#196)

Order #2 (Oct 19). That the City Manager is requested to review and reconsider the Harvard Square Kiosk Operating and Stewardship Model. Councillor McGovern, Mayor Siddiqui, Councillor Simmons, Councillor Flaherty (PO26#189)

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Summary

TEXT OF CHARTER RIGHT ORDERS

O-7 Oct 19, 2026

COUNCILLOR AL-ZUBI

COUNCILLOR SOBRINHO-WHEELER

WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge is a welcoming community that does not support discrimination or violence anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS: The State of Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians according to Palestinian human rights groups and civil society, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, among other organizations and experts; and

WHEREAS: The State of Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip according to the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch; and

WHEREAS: Israel's military occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice; and

WHEREAS: There are over 700,000 Israeli settlers across 371 illegal Jewish-only settlements and outposts in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Relief; and

WHEREAS: The City Council unequivocally condemns antisemitism and all forms of bigotry, hatred, and discrimination, and affirms that declining to do business with companies that are complicit in genocide, apartheid, and illegal occupation is a response to those companies' actions, not hostility toward any people because of their ethnicity, religion, or national origin; and

WHEREAS: The City's investment decisions should reflect our residents' values and our values on human rights; and

WHEREAS: Cambridge residents should have the right to know that their city's funds are not being placed in companies complicit in genocide, apartheid, and occupation; and

WHEREAS: The City has already enacted policy orders to divest public funds from the fossil fuel sector and private prisons, identify City contracts with vendors whose products are used to perpetuate violations of International Human Rights Laws, and divested from financial institutions doing business with the apartheid government of South Africa, yet has no policy on avoiding companies complicit in the genocide, apartheid and occupation of Palestinians; and

WHEREAS: The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a highly respected international human rights organization, which won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for relief work including aid to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, was actively providing relief to Palestinian refugees forcibly displaced by Israel in 1948, is an institutional partner of the United Nations, and even formed part of the Cambridge Anti-Apartheid Coalition that fought to divest from Apartheid South Africa; and

WHEREAS: According to Cambridge for Palestine's divestment report, the City Pension Fund includes $2.6M invested in Palantir, a data analytics and AI firm enabling Israeli military targeting operations and Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE's) surveillance and deportation infrastructure, in addition to $18.2M invested in weapons manufacturers such as Elbit Systems, military contractors such as Lockheed Martin and other companies identified by the AFSC Divestment Shortlist as having severe and consistent involvement directly contributing to genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians; and

WHEREAS: The City's Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund includes $3M directly invested in GE Aerospace, one of the world's largest weapons manufacturers. GE Aerospace produces engines for bombers, attack helicopters, and surveillance aircraft routinely implicated in attacks on Palestinian civilians. Cambridge's own FY25 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (p. 42) flags this position as a concentration risk, meaning the city is overexposed to this single investment to a degree that it may introduce financial risk to public funds; and

WHEREAS: The Massachusetts Municipal Depository Trust (MMDT) offers municipalities pools of investment that are also allowed by the State, yet includes investments in Boeing, which manufactures weapon systems routinely used in war crimes against Palestinian civilians; and

WHEREAS: The companies identified by the AFSC Divestment Shortlist as having severe and consistent involvement directly contributing to genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians represent a very small percentage of the overall Pension Fund (approximately 1%); and

WHEREAS: Divestment from a portfolio position representing approximately 1% of total fund assets does not constitute a material deviation from the Fund's overall investment strategy, asset allocation, or risk profile; and

WHEREAS: Companies implicated in gross human rights violations, war crimes, or violations of international law carry elevated legal, regulatory, reputational, and litigation risk that may itself constitute a material financial risk to long-term shareholder value, independent of any ethical considerations; and

WHEREAS: The Board's primary duty is to act solely in the financial interest of its beneficiaries, and nothing in this policy directs trustees to accept a lower rate of return or greater risk in service of any non-financial objective; and

WHEREAS: The City's OPEB Trust Fund (see FY25 Annual Comprehensive Report, p. 39) is subject to State laws (see MGL c. 44, s. 54) that allow for local discretion in investments made; and

WHEREAS: Municipalities' direct investment funds are subject to MGL c. 44, s. 55, which sets out which investments are permitted, pursuant to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' list of acceptable investments; and

WHEREAS: The Budget Department already seeks to use only local banks when investing in certificates of deposits (CDs) and other funds (as referenced in POR 2021 #81); now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the Cambridge Retirement Board be requested to divest from, and refrain from future investments in, companies with severe and consistent involvement directly contributing to genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians, as defined by the AFSC Divestment Shortlist and Israel Bonds; and be it further

ORDERED: That the OPEB Fund trustee be requested to divest the OPEB Trust Fund from, and refrain from future investments in, companies with severe and consistent involvement directly contributing to genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians, as defined by the AFSC Divestment Shortlist and Israel Bonds; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and is hereby requested to add the following to the City of Cambridge Budget Book Investment Policy:

The City will work to ensure that no investment of City funds shall be made in investment portfolios that have any exposure to companies with severe and consistent involvement directly contributing to genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians, where a permitted alternative is available.

For any municipal funds that are invested directly, the Auditor shall use the AFSC Divestment Shortlist to evaluate whether a company has severe and consistent involvement directly contributing to genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians, and as such any investment in said company would be prohibited under this budget policy; and be it further

ORDERED: In the event that the AFSC is no longer maintaining a current Divestment Shortlist, the Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments be requested to maintain an alternative list to serve as the Divestment List for purposes of this Order. This list should be consistent with the findings, determinations, listings, or formal conclusions of international legal or human rights bodies, including without limitation: (1) The International Court of Justice, (2) The International Criminal Court, (3) The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, (4) Commissions of inquiry established by the United Nations Human Rights Council, and (5) United Nations Human Rights Council Resolutions 31/36 and 53/25; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council during the FY 2028 budget process with the feasibility of and a timeline on implementation that shall be no more than six months from the enactment of this Policy Order; and be it further

ORDERED: If a provision of this policy order or its application is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect another provision or application of this section that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application.

O-8 Oct 19, 2026

COUNCILLOR AL-ZUBI

COUNCILLOR SOBRINHO-WHEELER

WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge is a welcoming community that does not support discrimination or violence anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS: The State of Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians according to Palestinian human rights groups and civil society, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, among other organizations and experts; and

WHEREAS: The State of Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip according to the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch; and

WHEREAS: Israel's military occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice; and

WHEREAS: There are over 700,000 Israeli settlers across 371 illegal Jewish-only settlements and outposts in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Relief; and

WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge has engaged in municipal boycotting activity for human rights purposes in the past, including boycotts of companies doing business with South Africa under the former apartheid regime; and

WHEREAS: The City Council unequivocally condemns antisemitism and all forms of bigotry, hatred, and discrimination, and affirms that declining to do business with companies that are complicit in genocide, apartheid, and illegal occupation is a response to those companies' actions, not hostility toward any people because of their ethnicity, religion, or national origin; and

WHEREAS: The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a highly respected international human rights organization, which won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for relief work including aid to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, was actively providing relief to Palestinian refugees forcibly displaced by Israel in 1948, is an institutional partner of the United Nations, and even formed part of the Cambridge Anti-Apartheid Coalition that fought to divest from Apartheid South Africa; and

WHEREAS: Concerned Cambridge community members have brought it to the attention of the City that the City of Cambridge has contracts with companies who sustain Israel's apartheid, genocide, and illegal occupation of Palestine according to the AFSC including contracts 30566, 30556, 30169, 30171, 30474 with Motorola Solutions, who supply essential infrastructure used in illegal Israeli settlements and prisons, and also provide facial recognition, tracking and surveillance under their subsidiary Vigilant Solutions to I.C.E.; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Council refer the following proposed amendment to Title 2 of the Municipal Code, adding Chapter 2.132, to the Ordinance Committee for a hearing:

This Chapter shall be known as the “Ordinance to Boycott Companies Complicit in Israel’s Apartheid, Genocide, and Illegal Occupation of Palestine.”

2.132.010 - Purpose.

It is the purpose of this Chapter to ensure that Cambridge does not contract with and thereby spend taxpayer dollars on companies that are complicit in Israel’s apartheid, genocide, and illegal occupation in Palestine.

2.132.020 - Definitions.

Unless another meaning is clearly apparent from the context, the following words as used in this Chapter shall have the following meanings:

“Comparable low bid or offer,” a responsive and responsible bid or offer which is no more than ten percent greater than the lowest bid or offer submitted for goods or a service;

“Complicit in Israel’s apartheid, genocide, and illegal occupation of Palestine”, companies identified by the AFSC as having severe, consistent, and direct involvement in the genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestine, as defined by their divestment shortlist (see: https://investigate.info/divest).

“Essential”, necessary in order that an agency or authority may perform its mission, there being no substitute, to avoid irreparable harm to agency or authority programs.

“Person”, any individual and any partnership, firm, association, corporation, or other entity, or their subsidiaries.

“Municipal agency or authority”, all awarding authorities of the City of Cambridge, including, but not limited to, all executive offices, agencies, departments, and commissions.

2.132.030 - Implementation:

a) Except as otherwise provided in subsections (c) and (e), a municipal agency or a municipal authority may not procure goods or services from any person listed on the restricted purchase list maintained by the Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments.

b) A municipal agency or authority shall not sell, rent, or dispose of any real property including but not limited to granting the right to lay, construct, maintain, or operate pipelines through, over, across, or under land, water, park, or reservation of the City of Cambridge, its agencies or its political subdivisions, to any person complicit in Israel’s genocide, apartheid, and illegal occupation of Palestine. The City Manager may sell, rent, or dispose of said property or grant said rights to said person only after certifying in writing to the City Council that such action is essential to protect the health and safety of the public.

c) A municipal agency or municipal authority may procure goods or services from a person who is on or who is so determined to meet the criteria of the restricted purchase list only after certifying in writing to the Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments that:

i) the procurement is essential; and

ii) compliance with subsection (a) would eliminate the only bid or offer, or would result in inadequate competition.

d) In any solicitation, a municipal agency or municipal authority shall provide ample notice of the requirements of this section. Prior to reviewing responses to bid documents for any procurements, or, if there are none, prior to entering into any contractual arrangement, the awarding authority shall obtain from such person seeking a contract a statement, under the pains and penalties of perjury, from an authorized representative of such person seeking a contract, on a form to be provided by the awarding authority, declaring the nature and extent to which said person is engaging in activities which would subject said person to inclusion on the restricted purchase list.

e) In any procurement that includes bidders or offerors who are on or meet the criteria of the restricted purchase list, the awarding authority may award the contract to a person who is on or who meets the criteria of the restricted purchase list only if there is no comparable low bid or offer by a person who is not on the restricted purchase list.

f) The Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments shall establish and maintain a restricted purchase list and, in doing so, shall consider the AFSC Divestment Shortlist and the findings of the bodies listed in subsection (f)(i).

i) In the event that the AFSC is no longer maintaining a current Divestment Shortlist, the Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments should maintain a restricted purchase list consistent with the findings, determinations, listings, or formal conclusions of international legal or human rights bodies, including without limitation: (1) The International Court of Justice, (2) The International Criminal Court, (3) The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, (4) Commissions of inquiry established by the United Nations Human Rights Council, and (5) United Nations Human Rights Council Resolutions 31/36 and 53/25.

g) The restricted purchase list shall be updated at least once every three months.

(i) The Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments shall provide an updated version of the restricted purchase list to all municipal agencies and authorities.

2.132.040 - Enforcement:

a) The Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments is hereby authorized and directed to promulgate regulations to assure the timely and effective implementation of sections 2.132.010 through 2.132.050, inclusive.

b) Any contract entered into in violation of sections 2.132.010 through 2.132.050, inclusive, shall be void.

c) Annually on or before January first, the Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs and Public Investments shall file a report with the City Manager and the City Council detailing compliance with sections 2.132.010 through 2.132.050, inclusive.

d) The provisions of this section are severable. If any subsection, provision or portion of this section is determined to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining provisions of this section shall continue to be valid.

2.132.050 - Timeline:

The provisions of this ordinance shall apply to contracts entered into after the effective date of this ordinance. Any existing contract shall remain in full force and effect and not be subject to the provisions of this ordinance until the contract is reprocured.; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the City Solicitor to provide the Ordinance Committee, before its hearing, with an opinion on the proposed ordinance under M.G.L. c. 30B and applicable federal law.

O-2 Oct 19, 2026
COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN
MAYOR SIDDIQUI
COUNCILLOR SIMMONS
COUNCILLOR FLAHERTY

WHEREAS: The Harvard Square Kiosk, opened in January 1928 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 30, 1978, has served for nearly a century as one of Harvard Square's most recognizable civic landmarks; and

WHEREAS: Ownership of the Kiosk was transferred from the MBTA to the City of Cambridge in 1983, and the following year Out of Town News, founded by Sheldon Cohen in 1955, relocated there, remaining until October 31, 2019, and becoming closely identified with the history, character, and daily life of Harvard Square; and

WHEREAS: Following extended renovation, the Kiosk reopened on May 30, 2025, under an operating model centered principally on visitor information and programmed public use; and

WHEREAS: More than a year of operation since the Kiosk's reopening has provided the City with an opportunity to assess how the current operating model functions in practice, and whether it fully advances the civic, cultural, and economic potential of this prominent public asset; and

WHEREAS: Visitor information remains an important public function, but the Kiosk's location, history, and prominence provide an opportunity for a broader role encompassing cultural programming, artistic expression, public performance, community gathering, and other activities that contribute to the vitality and distinctive character of Harvard Square; and

WHEREAS: The City has a substantial interest in maintaining Harvard Square as a vibrant commercial, cultural, and civic district, and the Kiosk is uniquely situated to advance that goal by welcoming visitors, engaging residents and students, showcasing artists and performers, supporting local businesses and restoring the historic Out of Town News identity as part of a renewed and expanded public purpose would be an important step in that process; and

WHEREAS: Effective stewardship of a prominent public space benefits from clear accountability, a unified vision, sustained relationships with surrounding businesses and institutions, responsive maintenance, and coordinated year-round programming; and

WHEREAS: Based upon the City's experience since the Kiosk reopened, the City Council believes there is an opportunity to reconsider its stewardship model in the public interest and more fully integrate this City-owned asset into the daily commercial, cultural, artistic, and community life of Harvard Square through stronger local partnerships, active programming, flexible public use, and consistent activation of the space; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to review the City's current operating and contractual arrangements for the Harvard Square Kiosk, including the extent to which the existing model is achieving the City's goals for year-round activation, public use, local partnership, cultural programming, economic vitality, maintenance, and stewardship of the space; and be it further

ORDERED: That, as part of this review, the City Manager be and hereby is requested to identify the City's contractual options, including any authority to modify, conclude, or replace existing arrangements, should a different stewardship model better advance the objectives set forth herein; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to develop a transition plan for a long-term stewardship model that establishes clear and unified responsibility for the Kiosk's programming, maintenance, beautification, activation, partnerships, and public use; and be it further

ORDERED: That any future stewardship arrangement provides for sufficient and dedicated resources to support year-round maintenance, beautification, programming, and activation of the Kiosk and surrounding public space, including partnerships with Cambridge businesses, cultural and educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, residents, artists, and performers; and be it further

ORDERED: That any future stewardship arrangement include clear measures of performance, including accessibility, cleanliness, frequency and diversity of programming, public participation, community feedback, use of the space throughout the day and year, engagement with local stakeholders, and contribution to the vitality of the surrounding district; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to arrange for the return and installation of the restored historic Out of Town News neon signage and to restore the official name Out of Town News Kiosk, preserving this landmark's historic identity while establishing its renewed role as an active public gathering place in Harvard Square; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager report back to the City Council on the findings of this review within 60 days, including the performance of the current operating model, available contractual options, a proposed long-term stewardship structure, funding requirements, and an anticipated implementation schedule.