



HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Human Services and Veterans Committee will hold a public hearing on October 21, 2025 to further discuss the Out of School Time (OST) Expansion Study Report which was presented to the City Council on May 19, 2025.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12:08 PM
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Human Services and Veterans Committee was held on Tuesday, October 21, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Wilson. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

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

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Nolan – Absent

Councillor Siddiqui – Absent*

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote

Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 3, Absent -2. Quorum established.

*Councillor Siddiqui was present and remote at 12:08p.m.

Co-Chair Willson offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to further discuss the Out of School Time (OST) Expansion Study Report which was presented to the City Council on May 19, 2025, CMA 2025 #127. Present at the meeting was Michelle Farnum, Assistant Director of Child, Youth, and Family Services for the Department of Human Services (DHSP), Susan Richards, Coordinator/Supervisor of Activities Agenda for DHSP, Khari Milner, Program Manager for Cambridge Public Schools (CPS), and Mercedes Soto, Impact and Evaluation Advisor for DHSP. Also present was Councillor Zusy.

Councillor Wilson recognized Michelle Farnum, Susan Richards, and Khari Milner who gave a presentation titled “Human Services and Veteran’s Committee: OST Expansion Study”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. Also included in the Agenda Packet were the OST Expansion Study Report and the OST Expansion Study Summary, which were presented to the City Council on May 19, 2025.

Councillor Wilson thanked staff for all the information that was shared through the presentation and asked if there was any growth in the Inclusionary division of DHSP. Michelle Farnum shared that they currently have three full-time staff and are in the process of interviewing for a fourth full-time position. Michelle Farnum highlighted that it is important to hire someone who has experience in programs that support young people with special needs. In addition, Michelle Farnum provided an overview of the work and services that are provided by Inclusion staff, pointing out that the goal is to have young people be successful. Councillor Wilson offered the suggestion of having partnerships with CPS regarding paraprofessionals in the schools and after-school

programs. Michelle Farnum shared that there are approximately 40 paraprofessionals who currently work in afterschool programs and DHSP is always looking to recruit more and build partnerships. She recognized that it can be a lot of work for those staff to go from a school setting right into afterschool. Councillor Wilson spoke on the success of Camp Rainbow and urged the City to try and find a similar program during the school year and not just during the summer. Michelle Farnum shared that she and other city and school staff 100% agree, and that it has been a topic of discussion in recent meetings.

Councillor Wilson recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who highlighted the work and progress that has been achieved so far and recognized that there is still more work that needs to be done to reach the City's goal of providing out-of-school services. Vice Mayor McGovern asked how many additional full-time frontline staff have been hired. Michelle Farnum shared that there have been close to 20 additional people hired and DHSP is constantly thinking of how more hires could be used effectively in the various programs. The Vice Mayor and Michelle Farnum reviewed how the budget supports programs and children. Vice Mayor McGovern asked if there was any information available on why families withdraw from programs. Michelle Farnum shared that there was a form on the City website which asked families to provide information on why they were withdrawing from programs, but many families opted out of providing that information, so they currently do not have that data.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who thanked staff for the informative presentation. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler referenced a previous discussion about expanding programs and compensation and asked how the City is partnering with other after school organizations to reach capacity levels. Susan Richards noted that there have not been changes related to employees leaving nonprofit positions, but many part-time employees from DHSP are moving to full-time positions with CPS for better opportunities and benefits. Susan Richards pointed out how this can create challenges with retaining staff. Susan Richards added that DHSP is actively working to create sustainable jobs to help maintain a strong out of school time program for children. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler shared his support for professional growth and creating career pathways.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who offered comments on the importance of the City's partnership with CPS. Councillor Siddiqui asked how DHSP is prioritizing initiatives that were included in the budget, such as inclusion specialists and expanded program seats, going forward. Khari Milner emphasized the importance of being intentional and prioritizing the different initiatives to focus on goals and provide the right support for students. Khari Milner provided examples of some of the current priorities, such as enhancing collaboration between DHSP and CPS and engaging with parents and caregivers for feedback. Susan Richards provided a brief overview of progress that has been made and shared that staff continue to have meetings to move forward with initiatives. Councillor Siddiqui asked when the Action Teams would be formed. Susan Richards and Khari Milner explained that they are working with partners to move projects forward and plan to formalize Action Teams in the fall and shared how they would be tracking progress. Councillor Siddiqui spoke on the importance of having smart goals and shared that the City Council would look forward to having updates. Councillor Siddiqui asked if there have been any updates with the Mentorship Program, noting that she was aware a proposal needed to be submitted. Susan Richards shared that some may be launching in early 2026, with others starting with the 2026-2027 school year.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Zusy who thanked the team for their efforts with afterschool and universal pre-k initiatives. Councillor Zusy offered the suggestion of reviewing the fee structure rates for afterschool, adding that fees could be higher for those who can afford it, which may help with expansion and strengthen programs. Councillor Zusy shared concerns about limited afterschool as it relates to four-year-olds, noting that many families are unable to afford private childcare services. Michelle Farnum shared that DHSP recently introduced a new sliding scale fee for afterschool programs, based on family income and size, emphasizing that the goal is to try and keep City run programs affordable. Michelle Farnum pointed out that due to State licensing, there are no after school programs for preschool aged children, she spoke on the full day and half day preschool programs that are offered through the City and other community programs. Councillor Zusy shared that she has heard from the community that it would be helpful for families to understand in advance how many spots are available at each program. Councillor Zusy added that bringing art students into these programs would be beneficial for children because of their creativity. Michelle Farnum provided a brief overview of DHSP's partnership with Lesley University students and shared that DHSP is consistently

advertising job opportunities at various locations throughout the city. Michelle Farnum shared that there have been discussions related to the enrollment process and how they prioritize the different challenges. Michelle Farnum shared information on the lottery system, noting that she understands there is a desire for families to know what is available, but with this system they are unable to predict what will be available.

Councillor Wilson made a motion to extend the meeting by five minutes.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Absent

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

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

Councillor Wilson offered closing remarks and thanked everyone for the productive conversation. Councillor Wilson emphasized how important it is to have act on all these goals that are being discussed. Councillor Wilson reviewed some of the priorities that were discussed, such as expanding space, supporting students with special needs, and continued partnership between DHSP and CPS.

Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Absent

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

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

The Human Services and Veterans Committee adjourned at approximately 2:08p.m.

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:

[Oct 21, 2025 12:00 PM - Human Services & Veterans Committee - Committee Meeting](#)

A communication was received from Michelle Farnum, Assistant Director of Child Youth & Family Services for the Department of Human Services, transmitting a presentation related to the Out Of School Time Expansion Study.

A communication transmitted from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to Cambridge Out of School Time (OST) Expansion Study Report.