



HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Monday, October 27, 2025

11:00 AM

Sullivan Chamber

The Health and Environment Committee will hold a public hearing to review and discuss the launch of the update to the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) and hear a status report on the current plan including any adjustments that have been or might be made before any update.

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"/>	11:45 AM

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Health and Environment Committee was held on Monday, October 27, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:00 a.m. by the Chair, Councillor Nolan. 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.

- Councillor Azeem – Absent
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote
- Councillor Wilson – Absent*
- Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.
- *Councillor Wilson was present and remote at 11:45a.m.

Councillor Nolan shared that the Call of the meeting was to review and discuss the launch of the update to the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) and hear a status report on the current plan including any adjustments that have been or might be made before any update. Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks and read from the following statement (not verbatim):

As the call of the meeting suggests, we are here today to discuss the Urban Forest Master Plan, originally published in late 2019, and is set to be updated this fiscal year. This meeting will focus on the process for updating the UFMP, reviewing progress on targets and lessons learned within the original UFMP over the past five years, and identifying goals for the next iteration. We last discussed the UFMP in detail in this committee in April 2023, where we discussed a number of ways to improve public outreach, urban forest strategies, and citywide coordination. A number of those discussions led to important changes: there is a very accessible public newsletter for forest friends subscribers, we have done a lot of work to expand tree wells to improve plantings in the public way, and we have done a lot to coordinate other large plantings with DCR and other partners - all of which we will hear more about today. The City does a lot of great work on our urban forest efforts - and we still fail in some ways - understandable, given the uphill battle we face against climate change, but not acceptable. Now is the time to review progress, redouble our efforts, and improve upon our practices so that we meet our goals.

I’m happy to be here discussing the next iteration of the UFMP - my plan is for this update to look very similar to the other long-term planning updates we’ve discussed in this committee, including the Zero Waste Master

Plan, the Net Zero Action Plan, and the Zero Emissions Transportation Plan. I am a firm believer that our plans are useless if we are not constantly reviewing efforts and hitting goals. I think the top line from DPW today will be that we are on track on a lot of our City-led goals, but struggle in other ways, including protecting canopy on private land. I also want to welcome the chairs of the Committee on Public Planting today (Cindy Carpenter and Sophia Emperador). The CPP does some really important work month-to-month on behalf of the UFMP and our city as a whole and the members all have great expertise when it comes to improving the UFMP. I hope that by including all of us, city staff, the council, and committee members, and the larger community, that we can have a robust and honest discussion about progress and goals and how best to move forward.

As DPW staff will get into, the urban forestry team has a consultant on board reviewing the UFMP over the next several months, so this will be the first meeting to launch that process. With that, I'd like to introduce Commission John Nardone and his team.

Present at the meeting were John Nardone, Commissioner of Department of Public Works, Andrew Putnam, Superintendent of Urban Forestry and Landscape, David Lefcourt, City Arborist, Abigail Bentley, Assistant City Arborist, Susanne Rasmussen, Deputy Climate Chief, and Stephanie Hsia, Senior Associate from Reed Hilderbrand. Present from the Committee on Public Planting were Cindy Carpenter and Sophia Emperador. Also present was Councillor Zusy.

Councillor Nolan recognized John Nardone and Andrew Putnam who gave a presentation titled "Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan 5 Year Update". The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Councillor Nolan opened Public Comment.

Charles Teague, 90 Jackson Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about tree loss and the fees associated with hazardous trees.

Cynthia Hibbard, 23 Ellsworth Avenue, Cambridge, MA, shared her appreciation for all of the work done by the City and Committees and the progress that is being made.

Will Sherwood, Medford, MA, shared that they were looking for guidance related to tree preservation.

Gretchen Friesinger, Cambridge, MA, shared that they were interested in learning more about the progress on tree canopy in the main corridors.

Councillor Nolan recognized Cindy Carpenter and Sophia Emperador for comments. Cindy Carpenter highlighted the DPW team for planting trees and making improvements towards tree canopy. Cindy Carpenter provided suggestions on new strategies to approach some of the challenges, such as incentivizing tree planting in institutions, businesses, and parking lots. Cindy Carpenter added that it is important to look at other planting options for residents, such as shrubs, and include urban forestry within zoning policies. Sophia Emperador agreed with previous comments and noted the importance of creating improvements at the ground level to help support tree canopy growth. Sophia Emperador added that it would be helpful to do more outreach and learn from other cities to work towards the more challenging parts of urban forestry. John Nardone shared his appreciation for the partnership with the Public Planting Committee and agreed that there is a need for better public outreach and he would be open to exploring the idea of incentivizing private planting, noting that it could come with challenges.

Councillor Nolan had clarifying questions related to the Tree Production Ordinance and protecting trees on neighboring properties, noting that the 76% exemption rate was high and if the Ordinance was effective. Andrew Putnam shared information on state laws and what the city can and cannot enforce, sharing that it mostly relies on cooperations between abutters. Andrew Putnam pointed out that exemptions do require documented assessments to understand if tree removal is necessary.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who thanked staff for the presentation. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler highlighted the efforts being made to improve tree longevity and tree protection, including

trees that are on private property. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler noted the importance of equity and asked for more information on multilingual outreach. Andrew Putnam agreed that there is a need for multilingual outreach, which could be expanded through the UFMP for more awareness. Andrew Putnam pointed out that denser areas of the city have less tree canopy and it is important to engage with private property owners to help increase tree coverage.

Councillor Nolan asked how many trees there are on city streets. Andrew Putnam shared that there are about 14,000 trees. Andrew Putnam added the important role those involved in Forest Friends have in keeping those trees healthy and the difference it makes. Councillor Nolan offered suggestions on how to provide more information to the community about Forest Friends.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zusy who asked how often the city is replacing young trees that were planted and did not survive and who has the responsibility of weeding tree wells, the city or the public. Councillor Zusy also asked if there are policies related to protecting neighboring trees on private properties. Andrew Putnam shared that tree planting and tree replacement happens in the spring and in the fall. David Lefcourt added that Cambridge has improved tree protection practices through education, using better materials, and having stronger partnerships between the Forestry and Engineering Departments. David Lefcourt added that these practices should be added to private property projects, and it would be something worth addressing in the future. John Nardone agreed that it would be something important to look into, adding that Cambridge has good relationships with contractors. John Nardone added that it is important to maintain good relationships within Departments to have consistent tree protection practices in the city.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked how the City Council can be most effective in supporting staff to move forward with next steps. Additionally, Councillor Siddiqui noted how important it is to also engage with the university community. John Nardone shared that tree initiatives are still a work in progress and that staff are working on developing recommendations to bring to the City Council. John Nardone explained that the City does have a strong relationship with universities, but there are challenges, and shared how the City Council may have a positive role in encouraging better tree practices. Cindy Carpenter added that there is always a need for more proactive conversations in the community. Councillor Siddiqui shared that she looks forward to reviewing the proposed recommendations and moving forward with next steps.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who highlighted the importance of language justice to reach environmental goals. Councillor Wilson offered comments on having short and long-term goals when replacing trees and having strategies that are mindful as it relates to the budget. John Nardone explained that the city is progressing with its tree preservation and being conscious of the budget when trying to reach and maintain goals. John Nardone added that being creative with outreach would be helpful and shared that newly planted trees have a two-year contract warranty, noting that there would not be a cost to replace a tree within those two years.

Councillor Nolan pointed out the concerns that have been raised by the community related to the Linear Park reconstruction and asked for clarification on what the city plans to do as it relates to tree canopy. John Nardone explained that construction is aimed at protecting trees, but small impacts are possible. John Nardone shared information on the different departments and contractors that will be involved in protecting the trees.

Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zusy shared concerns about LIDAR limitations and asked if the City could provide more information. Andrew Putnam explained the areas in which LIDAR is useful, but noted it is not a single decision tool that is being used.

Councillor Nolan asked if the timeline for the 5-year update is on track. Andrew Putnam confirmed that the timeline has not changed and that recommendations are expected in the winter of 2026.

Councillor Nolan recognized Stephanie Hsia who provided a brief overview of the impact of the UFMP and the work being done with Reed Hilderbrandt, sharing that they were excited for the City to continue working towards tree canopy goals. Stephanie Hsia emphasized how important it is to focus on areas where canopy is needed the most, such as the corridors. Stephanie Hsia highlighted the Tree Protection Ordinance and shared that it is always important to review effectiveness of policies and make changes when they are needed.

Councillor Nolan offered closing remarks and thanked everyone for their hard work.

Councillor Nolan 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 – Absent

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

The Health and Environment Committee adjourned at approximately 12:49p.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 27, 2025 11:00 AM - Health & Environment Committee - Committee Meeting](#)

A communication was received from Patrick Hayes, Aide to Councillor Nolan, transmitting a presentation from the Department of Public Works titled "Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan 5 Year Update".