MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, November 10, 2026

PUBLIC SAFETY
COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Councillor Al-Zubi, Chair
Councillor McGovern
Councillor Nolan
Councillor Simmons
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Public Safety Committee was held on Tuesday, November 10, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Al-Zubi 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 Al-Zubi – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor McGovern – Present/Remote
Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Simmons – Absent*
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote
Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.
*Councillor Simmons was present and remote at 12:08p.m.

Councillor Al-Zubi offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss three Police Review and Advisory Board (PRAB) reports, CMA 2026-85, CMA 2026-216, and CMA 2026-289. Present at the meeting were Carolina Almonte, Executive Director for Cambridge Human Rights Commission, David Canavan, PRAB Board Member, Franziskus Lepionka, Assistant City Solicitor, and James Mulcahy, Director of Professional Standards for the Cambridge Police Department. Caleb Demers, Chair of PRAB, was present via Zoom.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized Carolina Almonte who gave a presentation relative to the Police Review and Advisory Board. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized James Mulcahy who provided a brief overview of the responsibilities and workflow of the Department of Professional Standards and their relationship with PRAB.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who shared her appreciation for the reports and the efforts that are being made to improve PRAB. Councillor Nolan had clarifying questions

related to the 7 of 103 complaints that were substantiated and asked if this is a typical number compared to other cities. Carolina Almonte explained that some delays in reviewing complaints may be due to how often the Board meets. James Mulcahy shared that the Police Department follows the same investigation process for complaints that are received directly and those that are referred to the Department by PRAB. Councillor Nolan emphasized the importance of reviewing past complaints and making sure that residents feel comfortable reporting concerns. Councillor Nolan questioned whether investigations should be conducted by people outside the Police Department to avoid possible conflicts of interest. Carolina Almonte explained that the Board has discussed possible changes to how PRAB operates, including having more independent investigations. Carolina Almonte added that other cities use different approaches and Cambridge currently relies on the Police Department because it already has the resources to investigate complaints. Councillor Al-Zubi asked if other civilian police oversight models were more effective than a review-based model that is currently being used by Cambridge. Carolina Almonte explained how each model has its advantages and challenges.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who asked which categories the substantiated PRAB complaints fell under, such as discrimination or bias, improper procedures, or excessive force. In addition, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked for more information comparing the percentage of substantiated complaints in Cambridge with other cities. Carolina Almonte stated that she did not have that information available but would gather the data and provide it following the hearing.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized Councillor McGovern who asked about what efforts were being made to increase the public's awareness of PRAB and offered suggestions on how residents can file complaints. Councillor McGovern added that it would be beneficial for outreach to be conducted in neighborhoods and communities that have more frequent interactions with the Police Department. Carolina Almonte shared PRAB's plans to improve community outreach, including presentations to local organizations and schools, participating in community events, and possibly holding town hall meetings. Carolina Almonte emphasized that PRAB is working towards increasing public awareness and directly hearing from residents about their experiences with the Police Department.

Councillor Al-Zubi asked how PRAB reviews the Police Department's budget and if that information is shared with the City Council. Councillor Al-Zubi also asked about the Police Department's early intervention programs for Officers who receive repeated complaints and the possibility of hiring a temporary independent investigator. Councillor Al-Zubi added that it is important for communication between the City Council and PRAB to improve. Carolina Almonte noted that PRAB reviews the Police Department's budget annually during a public meeting but does not prepare a budget report. Carolina Almonte shared that the Board has discussed the possibility of hiring an investigator and would continue exploring the idea and review possible Ordinance changes and costs. James Mulchay reviewed the Police Department's early intervention program and shared that it can be triggered by receiving three complaints or qualifying incidents, even if the complaints are not substantiated. James Mulcahy shared that PRAB is not directly notified when an Officer enters the early intervention program. Councillor Al-Zubi asked what Police Department policies have been reviewed by PRAB and if there is any coordination with the City Council on policy recommendations. Carolina Almonte shared that

several policies have been reviewed by PRAB, such as body-worn cameras, the code of conduct, internal affairs, mental health policies, and the annual use of force report. Carolina Almonte added that PRAB also reviewed a Police Executive Research Forum report in 2024. James Mulcahy pointed out that the Forum report followed an officer involved shooting and that he believes the findings had been presented to PRAB.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who suggested exploring whether investigations could be handled by civilian staff within PRAB rather than the Police Department's Professional Standards Unit. Councillor Nolan asked if PRAB was included in the City's review list of Boards and Commissions and if PRAB still participates in the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement. Carolina Almonte confirmed that PRAB is part of the City's Ordinance review for Boards and Commissions and is a current member of National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement. Councillor Nolan asked for more information related to the oversight models that are used by other cities and emphasized the importance of accountability, stronger civilian oversight, and maintaining public confidence in the complaint process. Carolina Almonte shared that Cambridge uses a review-based model where the Professional Standards Unit conducts investigations and PRAB reviews the findings.

Councillor Al-Zubi asked what happens when a complaint is substantiated, if there is any follow up, and if complainants are interviewed during the investigations. James Mulcahy explained that the Police Commissioner reviews the investigation findings before they are sent to PRAB and once PRAB votes, the Commissioner will determine any discipline for substantiated complaints. He added that complainants are always contacted. He noted that body-word camera footage has also changed how investigations are conducted.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized David Canavan who provided an overview of the different responsibilities of PRAB and the Police Department. He emphasized the importance of understanding PRAB's authority, union agreements, and how proceedings can affect complaint timelines. David Canavan provided suggestions for updating the Ordinance and asked for the City Council's input on identifying other cities that could serve as comparison for Cambridge as it relates to police review.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized Caleb Demers who shared that every case they had reviewed during his time on PRAB included an interview with the complainant. Caleb Demers shared his support for continued discussions about the Board's responsibilities and improving communication between PRAB and the City Council.

Councillor Al-Zubi offered closing remarks and noted the importance of improving the public's awareness of PRAB while also addressing concerns related to the complaint review process.

Councillor Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.
Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes
Councillor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Absent
Councillor Sobinrho-Wheeler – Yes
Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The Public Safety Committee adjourned at approximately 1:16 p.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: https://cambridgema.v3.swagit.com/videos/408254